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COMMENTARY

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Author, Author

Fifty years on . . .

Paperbacks in brief

Poems by Michael Hofmann and Jon Silkin

Letters on Professing Literature, 'The Cosmic Serpent', The Tornielli Enigma

Among this week's contributors

Hugh Trevor-Roper

order, or a commission by the Führer"

For by this time, the war in Russia had begun; and with it the *Endlösung* was in operation. Previously, the plan had been to send the Jews to Madagascar, and it is interesting to note that, at that time, Himmler, in a written memorandum, rejected the idea of physical extermination of Jews as "bolshhevik . . . un-German and impracticable". But Hitler knew otherwise. Not for nothing had he boasted of being "the hardest man in

The *Einsatzkommandos* did as they were ordered. By the end of the year they had shot a million Jews. It was a messy business, and the method of killing would soon be changed. One of the commanders was sufficiently disturbed, before a mass-shooting in Minsk, to ask Himmler personally or whose authority the killings were



"Reise in die Vergangenheit" (Journey into the past) taken by Wolf Strache towards the end of the Second World War. This picture is included in The Imaginary Photo Museum (270pp, Penguin, £5.95, 0 14 006522 9), a selection of 457 photographs by Renate and L. Fritz Gruber.

gap. In November 1941, Himmler told his representative in Russia, Friedrich Jeckeln, who was in Berlin, that the Warsaw ghetto must be liquidated. Jeckeln was to arrange the details with the Reich Commissioner in Riga, Heinrich Lohe, "Tell Lohe," said Himmler, "that it is my orders, which is also the Führer's wish." This phrase, "*des Führers Wunsch*," thereafter became standard form. Being merely a "wish" it did not need to be written down; but a "Führer's wish" was as mandatory as a written order. In July 1942, Himmler ordered in the Auschwitz, ordered a speeding up of the extermination process "in accordance with the Führer's wish." This new phrase was very convenient and soon acquired a definition. "The Führer's wish," a former Gestapo officer explains, meant exactly the same as a Führer-order: "It is not a direct order. It is to be interpreted as such. The 'wish' is always communicated by a third person. It is not passed on explicitly as a Führer order; but it means an order."

The "third person" most regularly used was Erich Himmler. He alone commanded the name of the "master race" and the "final solution" and the "murder on the desired scale." He also was willing to take the responsibility with which Hitler, the real originator, could not be saddled. But in his speeches Himmler let it be known that he, like his subordinates, felt no strain; a strain (of course) not on his conscience but on his nerves. "The execution of this difficult command in which the Führer has laid on me shoulders," he said, "was the heaviest task that has ever been imposed upon me"; but it was a task which it was his duty, in carrying out "a wild and dangerous command" to perform. However, Hitler was never a man for bureaucratic precision; he liked to divide and rule; and in his nihilist zeal he was perfectly prepared to cut corners and use direct channels. He would occasionally give orders directly to Himmler's subordinates - Otto Globocnik, the organizer of the first great extermination camps, reported directly to him - and he sometimes went outside the SS altogether. The first and last of these was the Ukrainian Hitler's old cronie, Erich Koch, exterminated on his own account, pleading the Führer's orders, "Befehl ist Befehl," he said; and he had who villages exterminated in order to clear for himself a gigantic hunting estate.

From the evidence collected and set out by Mr Fleming it is abundantly clear that it was Hitler, and Hitler alone, whose powerful will drove the whole machine of destruction. However he sought to separate himself from the dirty business, the facts were clear, and known by others, and at times even admitted by him.

"Do you not know", said State secretary Stuckart to an official who protested about the great massacre in Prague, "that all this happens on orders from the highest level?" Admirer Canaris, the head of the Abwehr, sought at least twice to protest. At first he tackled Heydrich: Heydrich replied angrily that the matter was nothing to do with him or the SS; but that at these shootings were due exclusively to the personal orders of the Reichsführer.

Canaris tackled Hitler himself. "You are too soft", Hitler replied: "I must do this. After me, no other man will do it."

The relations between Hitler and Himmler, in this matter, are illustrated in an interesting document published by Fleming. It is an account of conversation between Himmler and SS General Maximilian von Herttrich recorded by a SS Sturmbannführer who with von Herttrich was his representative in the spring of 1943, had visited the extermination camp in operation. This account is in some respect a personal apology, but substantially it is convincing. According to this record Himmler expressed his sympathy with officers who were plunged into nervous depression by enforced service at such camps, for Hitler had designated such officers as "unfit for further service, not to be refused; indeed, those who serviced the gas-chambers were given military decorations. He

question), but why and how he avoided giving a written order to authorize so enormous a crime.

The question why is easily answered. Such cold-blooded mass-murder was a dirty job and very few Germans were of those who wished to see Germany's *Judenrein*, were willing to endorse it. As the charismatic leader of all in Germany, Hitler could not afford to be publicly associated with it. He had to keep up the myth, indeed, and the pressure: he had to insist that World Jewry was the ultimate enemy and that no victory could be complete until it had been destroyed. But the exalted preacher of the crusade must not soil his own hands with the squalid business of butchery. The Germans must suddenly discover, after victory, that there were no Jews. They had all been "evacuated", "transported to the East", "resettled", and were now the cause of confusion and could therefore be put comfortably out of mind. In fact, of course, they would all be under ground in subject Poland, under German authority, effectively enforced, and young pine-forests growing above their unmarked graves would effectively hinder any casual or curious excavation.

But how was such complete separation of the authority and the execution to be achieved? Who would dare to set up factories for mass murder, and put them into operation, without the protection of a covering order? Fortunately, there was one organization which could be entirely trusted. The SS was a special organization founded on the principle of unquestioning obedience, outside of the laws of the Reich. It was not a justification. And the head of the SS, the Reichsführer, "*der treue Heinrich*", could be trusted to translate into formal orders even a verbal message from the Führer.

The beginning of the *Endlösung*—the “Final Solution”—not of the idea, but of the machinery of execution is commonly ascribed to the famous Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942. But in fact its origins are earlier. As is now well known, its embryo was the *Gnadentod*, or Euthanasia programme. This programme, for the deliberate extermination of incurably ill (who afterwards included badly wounded German soldiers) was organized by a special section, “I-4.” This section was responsible directly to Reichsleiter Bouhler, head of the Führer Chancellery, and therefore to Hitler himself; but Hitler told Bouhler that the connection with the Party Chancellery “must in no circumstance appear to the outer world.” So

elaborate precautions were taken to ensure secrecy - false names, false addresses, code-languages. Nevertheless, the facts leaked out there were public protests; and in August 1941, after 90,000 persons had been killed, the programme was stopped. But the machinery was not dismantled. The personnel, the apparatus and the experience were merely transferred to Poland, to be used against the Jews. From this experience of T. A. Hitler had learned a valuable lesson. Extermination must be done very secretly, outiside Germany, and the most careful precautions must be taken to ensure that he could not be held personally responsible for it. In particular, it must no longer be organized by the Fuehrer. Fortunately, the German people were less likely to protest if the victims were not German but Jews.

There are direct links between the Euthanasia programme in Germany and the extermination programme in Poland. SA Sturmführer Christian Wirth, whose work in T.4 was officially declared to be a "special commission for the Führer", transferred his skills and technique in gassing to his new post at the extermination-camp Sobibor. Similarly, SS Oberführer Viktor Brack, of T.4, would be asked to send his chemist to Riga in order to ensure that the gas-chambers to be erected there and at Minsk conformed to the safe pattern established at home and the same Brack would send gassing apparatus to Riga "for the extermination of Jews". As we shall examine at the time, "it is a Führer

century". In March 1941, he told his generals that certain fields of activity in the Eastern theatre were reserved for the Reichsführer SS, whose activities which might not be very agreeable to squamous generals – were not to be questioned. The Armed Forces, he said, should be grateful to him: for "if I had deliberately kept them apart from anything that might smear them with the charge of dishonourable operations contrary to international law". The Wehrmacht, like the Führer, was to be unblemished. The faithful Himmerle, who knew the necessity, would do the dirty work. Two months later, Gestapo Circular forbade all further emigration of Jews "in view of the Final Solution of the Jewish question now undoubtedly about to occur".

So in the summer of 1941 three instructions went out. Two were verbal. Himmler told Rudolf Höß, the commandant of Auschwitz, in a secret meeting, that the Führer had ordered the extermination of the Jews in order to "achieve the final goal in our race." He also gave verbal instruction to Heinrich Euthanasia expert Christian Wirth, again referring to a "Führer-directive" and Göring wrote to Heydrich, the head of RSHA, or SS Head Office, that that new effort to exterminate the Jews through the *Endlösung*. Göring wrote to a "Führer-directive," which indeed was "obvious, for Göring had no direct authority over Heydrich; he could instruct him only in Hitler's name. Next day - August 1, 1941 - Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo, issued the so-called orders to the commanders of the four *Führergruppen*, or organizations

ordered. Himmler replied that no one should trouble himself with such questions: that it was a Führer-order and that Hitler and he took full responsibility for everything. Then he took the commandant to the "Folterkammer," a place of physical sharp tortures. The orders came from Hitler as supreme Führer of the German government and that they had the force of law." To another questioner, Himmler replied "categorically," that this was necessary war measure, personal and political. He said that such a situation lay outside the jurisdiction of any judicial authority, even of the SS and Police. Another questioner was similarly told, first by Heydrich, then by Himmler, that it was pointless to ask such questions. He said: "Folterkammer" was the name of the torture chamber of Himmler, and he himself held it "his historic duty to carry it out by every means."

Führer-orders (*Führerbefehle*) and Führer-directives (*Führerweisungen*) were terms of art: they had a recognized meaning. They were normally written orders. But the orders concerning exterminations were never written: that would have proven the connection which Hitler was determined to conceal. This fact sufficiently explains a written instruction by Bormann, issued precisely this time, that "only written Führer-orders" could be cited as authority. In other words, no appeal to these verbal orders would be acceptable as evidence, and as there were no written orders "no connection with Hitler could be shown."

In this connection a new phrase began to appear to fill the chasm

himself, said Himmler, loathed the work, but he recognized his duty, as they must recognize theirs. Then he gave an explanation which "deeply moved" his hearers. Recently, he said, he had discussed the problem with the Führer. The Führer had stated that the best blood of the white races was being shed in a fierce struggle from which — unless Germany won — only the destructive forces of international Jewry would gain. If Germany won, then, of course, all would be well: no one would then ask questions. But if Germany should lose, then at least let her have used her present power to protect future generations. "I have therefore decided," concluded the Führer, "after long reflection, to eradicate once and for all the biological strength of Jewry, so that even if the Aryan peoples emerge weakened from this struggle, at least we shall have put an end to those forces. . . . Himmler (according to his own account) had been 'deeply shaken by this order, which burdened us, as the Führer's most loyal followers, with a historic charge of monstrous weight'; but he recognized the force of Hitler's argument, and saw that he must obey, confident that after decades of inevitable misjudgment and slander, the heroic self-sacrifice of the SS, in undertaking this grisly task of 'disinfection', would be seen in its true, ennobling light.

That this account represents the authentic views both of Hitler and of Himmler seems to me certain; for both expressed the same views at other times. Himmler would spell it out in his Posen speech of October 4, 1943, and he frequently insisted on the necessity of a clear conscience in this business, which (he explained) was completely justified — provided that it was carried out in the right spirit — by the duty to obey and the holiness of the task. Not without reason did Hitler describe him as "our Ignatius Loyola". Hitler ordered: Himmler — essentially a "subaltern character" — believed and obeyed. In the summer of 1944, when Hungary seemed likely to surrender to the Russians, and the Hungarian Jews, protected by the Regent, Admiral Horthy, had not yet been exterminated, it was Hitler who forced the pace. Horrified by Horthy's dismissal of the Sztojay régime "which has recently carried out measures against the Jews", he threatened a *coup d'état* in Hungary. Meanwhile, as Ribbentrop informed the German plenipotentiary in Hungary, "the Führer expects that without further prevarication the measures against the Budapest Jews be carried out"; as in due course, after the *coup d'état*, they were. The man who carried them out was Adolf Eichmann, acting under the orders of the Austrian thug, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Heydrich's successor

as head of the RSHA. Though nominally subordinate to Himmler, Kaltenbrunner was the personal confidant of Hitler, even, by now, against the wobbling Reichsführer. For by now, at last, the grotesque conviction had cracked, not indeed in Hitler, whose "granite-firm" assurance would never fail, but in his blind *dévo*, Himmler. Himmler had been drawn into the programme of extermination, which he had at first repudiated as "un-German", by the iron will, and the firm command, of Hitler; and by now he was running out before the end of the drama. In the autumn of 1944, under pressure from his courtiers, and particularly from his masseur Kersten, he began to have doubts: again, not of morality but of expediency. He was thinking of his own survival, imagining himself the negotiator of peace, perhaps even the ruler of the new Germany. At first while listening to conspiratorial arguments, he refused to accept their conclusions. Moments of apparent surrender would be followed by bold reaffirmations of customary loyalty. "If National-Socialist Germany must go under", he told Kersten, "then our enemies, the traitors who now sit in concentration camps, must not triumph over us, and come out as victors. They shall not see that day! They shall perish with us! That is the clear and logical order of the

Führer, and I shall see that it is punctually and fully carried out!" However, as the doubts and the pressure increased, the foundations of that loyalty were destroyed. Already, at the end of November 1944, Himmler had forbidden further gassing of Jews and ordered the extermination-camps to be destroyed. Now Kersten put him in touch with the Swedish government and mounted the plan of the Swedish Red Cross expedition to rescue the surviving prisoners from the concentration camps. Finally — surely the most macabre episode of all — in April 1945 Kersten arranged, at his own house, a meeting between Himmler, the Grand Exterminator of the Jews, and Norbert Masur, a Swedish Jew, who was sent as an emissary, from Stockholm, of the World Jewish Congress.

Everything that we know about Himmler is grotesque: his monstrous achievement, his lunatic ideas, his fatuous naïveté, his accountant's pendency, his portentous illusions of grandeur, his feeble vacillations, even his absurd appearance. But surely nothing — not even his belief that he would be acceptable to the Allies as the ruler of Germany — can be more staggering than the impertinence of his greeting to the Jewish emissary as they met at Kersten's feudal estate in Mecklenberg: "Herr Masur, I think it

is time that we Germans and you Jews buried the hatchet."

Hitler had no intention of burying the hatchet. As Himmler drew him, he pushed forward, and since Himmler had lost his will to exterminate, he called upon Himmler's most reliable lieutenants — Kaltenbrunner, and Gestapo Müller — who had not been in the last battle was over the concentration-camps. Hitler, relying on his courtiers, issued a *Führer-Befehl* that the camps were to be blown up with their inmates, on the approach of the enemy; Himmler, on the approach of the enemy, insisted that they be left intact and their inmates handed over to the representatives of the Swedish Red Cross. In the chaos of defeat, Himmler's orders, or the apathy or the cowardice of his courtiers, prevailed. Hitler could now do nothing worse than expel "den treueschaffenden" from the Party and declare, with his last, impotent breath, his *unvergessliche* death-sentence on the whole *Volksdeutsche* people. It was with words of venomous hatred on his lips that the *Final Solution* was down at last, to his funeral pit.

Such is the story which emerges from Mr Fleming's patient scholarship, a valuable work which puts the straight and adds many interesting details to a terrible but still compelling story.

The return to prophecy

Geza Vermes

DOW MARMUR

Beyond Survival: Reflections on the Future of Judaism
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£7.95.
0 232 51456 9

Prior to the Holocaust, few Jews, if any, seriously doubted that Judaism had a future. Outrages inspired in the distant and not so distant past by anti-Semitism — say, the massacres by the Crusaders or the pogroms of Tsarist Russia — could be and were seen as affording historical proof of Jewish indestructibility. Auschwitz has shattered this faith and a large question-mark has been placed against Judaism's cherished concept of a loving and caring paternal deity. In consequence, from the middle of the present century survival has been the alpha and omega of Jewish concern, even generating a new literary genre, that of Holocaust studies, especially in North America where Jewish theologians continue to devote much paper and ink to sketches of the face of God after Auschwitz. The Canadian Jewish philosopher, Emil Fackenheim, has promoted to first importance a 614th commandment additional to the 613 biblical precepts: "Thou shalt not allow Hitler a posthumous victory" (by permitting the remnants of Auschwitz to be annihilated through assimilation or the activities of antisemites).

It goes almost without saying that this same issue of the survival and future of Judaism is also at the centre of a significant book by Dow Marmur, leading British Reform rabbi. However, as title and sub-title make clear, he looks beyond mere physical, racial, national continuance for a purpose that will enable Judaism to endure as a faith. In the past, the usual dilemma was how to be Jewish, how to address himself to the question of why be Jewish, why remain Jewish. His aim is to diagnose the state of contemporary Judaism in order to discover recourses for recovery and for a long and healthy future.

Explaining how the three branches of Jewry — orthodox, progressive (Reform and Liberal) and Zionist — have been attempting to outdo one another in securing Jewish survival, Marmur tells us that they have all failed. Isolationist Orthodoxy seeks to safeguard Judaism by denying the modern world and withdrawing from it. Reform Judaism, sprung from Emancipation and at home in the Western world, leaves the door wide open to an assimilation that can be as lethal as the death-camps. "The children of those who did not perish in Auschwitz . . . may now need to be Jews as they graduate from Oxford. It is a devastating shock to the exponent of Emancipation that both

towns may have the same effect on the future of Judaism." As for Zionism, by offering Jews a *secular* haven from assimilation in a Jewish state, it relegates religion to the background and simultaneously increases the threat of anti-Jewish/anti-Israeli hostility. One negative characteristic common to all three varieties is the promotion of what Marmur calls "vicarious Judaism" in which the majority provide only moral or financial support. No more than the minority actively demonstrate integrity, religious or otherwise.

In the author's judgment, there is a danger that the "survival syndrome" tends to confuse God with the Jewish people, to lead them to a worship of themselves or their Jewish state. Instead of the Creator. He quotes the ancient legend according to which Satan tried to dissuade Abraham from offering his only son on Mount Moriah with the argument that fulfilment of the divine command would leave the elderly patriarch without posterity. To this Abraham is said to have retorted: "My task is to do the will of the Holy One; he can look after the problem of Jewish survival."

Rabbi Marmur, in other words, wishes above all to reform the religious outlook of Judaism. Calling for a return to the true spirit of prophecy, he reminds his readers that in biblical antiquity the prophetic revolution proceeded on three fronts. It attacked the complacency of false prophets, the ritualism of the priests and the secularism of the kings. Reform Judaism, his own denomination, is a false prophet in as much as it offers its adherents what they want. Orthodoxy, with its strict observance of the Law, reflects the biblical priesthood, more interested in antique ceremonies than in new revelation. Zionism represents the interest of the king or the state. All three are in need of radical prophetic reshaping.

Here Marmur turns for inspiration to Martin Buber, a modernist opponent of Reform, a critic of Orthodoxy yet an expert in the Jewish past, a life-long Zionist who refused to identify the Jewish state with political power. Following in Buber's footsteps, Marmur sees the essence of prophetic Judaism to reside in dialogue: it is by means of human encounters that we address and are addressed by God. Judaism's future is ensured if individual Jews remain able and willing to wrestle with God as Jacob wrestles with his mysterious attacker in the book of Genesis. At the same time, this future must entail a re-adaptation to contemporary needs of the Torah-Law of Scripture, since Judaism as a historical phenomenon is an amalgam of prophetic-Pharisaic preaching and teaching and priestly-rabbinic obedience and practice. Such a re-adjustment is to be effected, we are told, by the democratic depletion of the Jewish people.

Marmur sits on the fence where there is question of whether diaspora

Jews should stay in the Gentile world or migrate to Israel. Prepared to argue with equal honesty and fervour "God save the Queen" and "Ha-Tiqvah", he preaches loyalty to the country in which he lives and concern for his Jewish brethren everywhere, especially in Israel. He does not believe in a divine election. God did not choose the Jews, he insists; the Jews chose God. Election is not racial, but moral. It springs from personal commitment: a view that echoes, I should add, the teaching of the prophets and prophetic-apocalyptic sectarianism such as Essenism and primitive Christianity.

In short, if Judaism is to have a future, its factions must join together to form a "greater Israel", one that will consist, furthermore, not only of Gentiles actually converted to Judaism, but of Jews and Christians (and, maybe Muslims, and communists?) co-existing and co-operating with one another in peace. For in accordance with prophetic universalism, Marmur believes that whatever is true and genuine in Judaism, must have a meaning for religion as such and an applicability to the world at large.

Beyond Survival will appeal primarily to Jews who look for a renewal of Judaism. But it is obvious throughout that Marmur is aware of the wider issues raised by his analysis of the Jewish predicament. Yet perhaps because of his burning concern with Judaism, or even because of his anxiety over hostile reactions from less progressively minded Jews, he accepts certain statements as axiomatic, leaving them unexamined. It follows that here and there a major insight remains undeveloped. He repeatedly asserts, for instance, that there can be no Judaism without Jews (and few insiders would disagree with him), and although not opposed to proselytization on a small scale ("too open an approach may jeopardize the distinctive character of Judaism"), he is convinced that Judaism must be a practical and ethical point of view in this may be so. But if Judaism, as he argues so eloquently, is more than the traditional way of life of an ancient people, and if it presupposes a spiritual world-view, a dialogue between man, the universe and God, should it not also postulate a total openness which will enable it to be embraced by one and all if so moved by the spirit? In fact, Rabbi Marmur's fascinating concept of a "greater Israel", diffidently alluded to again and again in these pages, points to the same age-old vision of one of the greatest of our prophets:

"Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage" (Isaiah 19:25).

Occasionally repetitive, now and then a little short-sighted and over-timid, this is an honest, tactful and thoughtful book that deserves careful study by a wide readership, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

Given a Flower

A field of grief

Ella Pybus

1
In the violet fixes an acid leaf
through the smaller of two petals:
this life,
its exact strong
sneer of pain. You said, look,
these petals,
their mauve scuffed paper, a hue
getting pale. From your yard

each mauve flinching shape of light, you said,
mixes with the pale, the pallid
dark of a spring night. Look,
holding out your thin hands
the fingers bent, whose flowers,
whose the mauve, dense
flections of twilight, streaked
with fingers,
the pale, livid nighttime?

2
An inseparable form
the mauve petal, its hem puckered — the mauve flesh.
No, you spoke, no. Furtive
hustress; not as the bee goes for it, but virgin,
and like a priest,
you admonished love. The violet
shuts, in the verge in which it roots.
A whole earthen cavern of music
a vacuum of it. With dreams
of lovelessness,
as the moon's shade peels off it.

3
A field of grief
in this snowy, glum light. You said, 'this is not
a future.' In this republic,
aching with snow, you walked
unsteadily away.

In this tarnished leaf printed in the overside
of the smaller of two petals,
matched and different,
the violet's life flickers. The flower
extinguishes like a lamp.
It is a penitential bloom,
the spring's want incessant
as the giving which fashions.

It is never nighttime. Its curd, that is a kind of dew:
pain to the male sex:
I have nothing to do
with the acid sex of the violet.

Forms of grief
asperge the southern night, its salt sprigs
of blossom, dogwood,
this twisted star-shape, in whose hollows
salt curds.

Louisville — Newcastle, 1981

Jon Silkin

JENNIFER S. UGLOW

The Macmillan Dictionary of
Women's Biography
534pp. Macmillan. £16.95.
0 333 30987 1

It's the aviators (though there are only a handful of them) who best symbolize what Jennifer Uglow's *Dictionary of Women's Biography* is after. Who better than Jacqueline Auriol, Amy Johnson or Sheila Scott to demonstrate that women can overcome their fear of flying (see Jong, Erica), and levitate out of their conventional sphere? The book's compilation, Ms Uglow says in her foreword, was undertaken for straight information, and second to "a desire to look at women's strength in action rather than (as is so often done) to lament their oppression as passive victims". It has, as a result, a breezy, pioneering, outdoor air. Most striking and representative in this sense, are the flighters, particularly those nineteenth-century ladies who exposed drawing-room mores on the icy crags. Lucy Walker (1836-1916), for instance, the first woman to climb the Matterhorn, who "generally climbed in a white print dress and liked to eat sausage cake and drink champagne on a climb", or Katy Richardson (1865-1927) who "insisted on taking bread, jam and tea." The incongruities of these ladies' lives have a special power to evoke the force of Change.

Or such, at least, are the first impressions. Women like these were the ones who, if they managed to outlive their notoriety, got CBEs and DBEs in the end. Behind the explorers and fliers stand ranks of public women and the doctors, lawyers, educationists and philanthropists who formed pressure groups and chaired committees, and who between them outlined the range of issues (civil rights, welfare, health, equal opportunities) that occasioned women's entry into public life. A lot of it can of course be cross-referenced to a subject index as campaigners for women's rights, and it's on this theme that the *Dictionary* achieves its most coherent and comprehensive documentation. If you trace the lives and interconnections of figures like Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917), a pioneer in opening up the medical professions to women, her sister Millicent Garrett Fawcett (DBE, 1847-1929), "leader of the constitutional suffrage movement", Emily Davies (1830-1921), founder of the college that became Girton, and Barbara Bodichon (1827-91), suffrage campaigner and cousin of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), you arrive at a solid, collective story — as you do in the USA, in Australia, and so on.

The collective biography that emerges from entries of this kind has a plot about progress, hard work, courage, determination and co-operation (so that — for instance — Pankhurst rows and splits, though recorded, form merely a sensational sub-plot). A nineteenth-century plot, in short. However, the very traditionalism that produces this mythic effect (ie, defining achievement in terms of public recognition) generates simultaneously a closer look, a quite different set of data. If you include enough of the women who throughout history have been judged in the eye of the accepted scales of the word "important", then you include a lot of lives that are very hard to assimilate to the progressive plot (and that goes for later twentieth-century lives as well as biographies of Anglo-Saxon queens).

The geographical range the book attempts, too (though the emphasis is on the UK, USA, the Commonwealth and the Caribbean), further blurs its focus and complicates its task. Ms Uglow, perhaps acknowledging this, says "in writing it I came to realize that far from presenting a book which was representative of women's experience, I was compiling a book of deviants — independent, odd, often difficult women who had defied the expectations of their society as to what a woman's role should be." The problem, though, is that these

"odd women" often defy the expectations of present-day feminists too. And this makes the *Dictionary* more embarrassing and in a way more interesting than first impressions suggest. The uncertainties of tone and of style, the bizarre juxtapositions of alphabetical listing produces, reveal a whole range of collisions and clashes between the "facts" (or accidents) of history and current orthodoxy.

Semi-mythic and more-or-less distant historical figures, for example, are unusually de-mythified: the Virgin Mary gets a brief, disappointed-sounding mention ("Nothing is known of Mary beyond the words of the New Testament . . ."); saints, unless like St Teresa of Avila they were also administrative geniuses, fare rather badly too; Pope Joan vanishes under a heap of sceptical conjecture ("According to later medieval chronicles . . . disguised herself as a man and went to Athens, either to follow a Benedictine monk with whom she was in love, or to obtain a degree in philosophy . . . Her existence was accepted until 1601"); Saint Cecilia probably owes her patronage of musicians to a mis-translation. Many of the notorious women of history — see Borgia, Lucrezia — are similarly reduced to plausibility, as pawns in political power-struggles. Unpopular figures (Catherine of Aragon) are cautiously rehabilitated; grandly wicked ones — Catherine the Great, for instance, becomes a more enlightened despot, who presented herself as an enlightened ruler, while actually increasing the power of the nobility, strengthening serfdom and stifling intellectual protest. Thus, much of the time, you feel you're being talked to coolly and rationally. And then you come upon entries like that for "Artemisia of Halicarnassus (5th century BC) . . . the first woman sea-captain . . . She died tragically, throwing herself from a high cliff because of her unrequited passion for a younger man", which undo all the good work. Artemisia, presumably, becomes plausible because of the scarcity of woman sea-captains, and because anyway she sounds a passionate, outdoor type. Several other only-just-possible ancient women are similarly indulged because (as alchemists, or physicians) they displayed progressive tendencies.

The didactic urge at work here comes out even more strongly in the treatment of some of the more shameless figures connected with the arts. George Sand, Baronne Dudevant (1804-76) is felt somehow to have had more than her due, and is irrelevantly (and backhandedly) apologized for on the grounds that "her exalted style and outspoken views on conventional marriage now seem dated". So don't be taken in by glamour. Nor by gossip: Lady Caroline Lamb is categorized (disingenuously) as an "English writer", to rescue her from the ignominy of being an episode in Byron's story; and Frieda Lawrence becomes splendidly unrecognizable as a "German-English . . . literary personality". Anais Nin (1903-77) is a suitable case for treatment too: her diaries "have been taken up by that part of the feminist movement which sympathizes with her belief in psychoanalysis and in the ineffable mystery and difference of 'masculine' and 'feminine' natures". Again, Françoise Sagan arouses suspicion for having attracted as much publicity through her flamboyant life-style as through her writing. "Her writing is not politically committed", we're told sternly, "and she is not a technical innovator." With film stars, the tone seems to escape worse obloquy by virtue of her recent campaigns on behalf of seals. Looking back, Rita Hayworth's sad story ("Her films became increasingly mediocre, her fourth and fifth marriages failed and her alcoholic breakdowns made her yet another Hollywood casualty") has a sour-sweet texture that spells "adventures"; while Bette Davis is congratulated for her powers of survival. "In 1962 her autobiography revealed the will she

had needed to struggle through the vicissitudes of her professional life and her four marriages."

Unless you're very spectacular indeed (like Cleopatra or — possibly — Maria Callas) you'd better not be showy. Ideally, you should combine the suspect (art and entertainment) professions with good works. Thus Margaret Atwood is given a thundering write-up: "her novels . . . range from wild comedy to moving studies of breakdown and combine her major concerns for the environment, the rejection of mechanistic capitalism, the protection of Canadian culture from absorption by the USA and the need for women to assert their individual identities." This list of causes echoes, of course, the kinds of concerns earlier *Dictionary* heroines were involved in, and women who directly continue that tradition like Greek writer and teacher Elly Alexiou (1896-) are praised without reservation. "All her works bear the distinctive marks of her personal experience; they are informed by a humanitarian, loving and compassionate spirit, seeking always for truth and justice." Here we're back to hagiography surely? And even on the most local level, the confusion of "objective" and didactic aims generates continuous stylistic irritations, like the mixture of past and present tenses, and the inconsistencies in naming-conventions which leave some women as surnames, and treat others with incongruous intimacy. To take a couple of random examples: of Florence Chadwick (1919-), the English long-distance swimmer, the text concludes confidently, "Florence became a stock-broker" of the formidable Katherine Graham, American newspaper proprietor, we're told in reassuring, rather headmistress fashion. "In 1963, after her husband's suicide, Katherine took over as President of the company. . . . A certain drift towards incoherence in some entries is perhaps also attributable to a reluctance to impart unhelpful information. Thus we're told of Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-98) that she forced herself "to the verge of breakdown by her austere habits and by her intellectual experiences", and by her account of the early life of Alphonse Plessis (La Dame aux Camélias) achieves an unintentional absurdity in its efforts to sound unshocked: at fifteen "she had already had a varied career as an apprentice laundress, mistress of an elderly bachelor, servant in an inn and child prostitute".

The embarrassments attendant on the project, however, though they threaten at moments to make the book unreadable, actually do the reverse.

Chimney slaves

Nesta Roberts

K. H. STRANGE

Climbing Boys: A Study of Sweeps' Apprentices 1773-1875
146pp. Allison and Busby, £7.95.
0 85301 431 3

Britain abolished the slave trade in her empire in 1833. The measure, did nothing for the tens of thousands of children who were the victims of "legalized slavery" in nineteenth-century industrial England. It was not until 1875 that Lord Salisbury, at the third attempt, got through the House of Commons the Bill that freed perhaps the most unfortunate of them, sweeps' apprentices, the climbing boys who went where a long brush could not. The same year saw the death of the last of the many boys who were killed at their task, from suffocation from exposure, from falls, sometimes by being literally roasted.

More than a century of efforts from campaigners who ranged from the hymn-writer James Montgomery to a handful of enlightened master sweeps had preceded the passing of the Bill. The first of them, John Hanway, a vigorous journalist as well as a

philanthropist, had been inspired by a visit to China, where parents might murder a new-born baby, and no questions asked. Horrified, Hanway, on his return to England, looked confidently for evidence of a contrasting benevolence among his fellow countrymen. He found that, for a child, admission to a workhouse or orphanage — was virtually a death sentence — sixty-four of seventy-eight children admitted to one London workhouse died before the end of the year — and that the inquiries of employers included forcing children as young as four, girls as well as boys, to climb flues nine inches square. Hanway had found his life's work.

Even with a kind and conscientious master, a sufficiently rare species, the lot of child apprentices was hideous. "No one knows the cruelty a boy has to undergo in learning", one of the better master sweeps told the Children's Employment Commission in 1863. "The flesh on elbows and knees was hardened by rubbing with the strongest oil." Even so, at first they would come back from their work with their arms and knees streaming with blood, and the knees looking as if the cap had been pulled off. "Then they were rubbed with byline again, and possibly sent off immediately to climb another chimney." In some boys I have

More importantly, Frances Trollope (1780-1863), traveller, travel-writer and novelist is unaccountably missing; as (to look to this century) are Rosamond Lehmann and Muriel Spark; the entry on Margaret Drabble is out of date and seems anyway to have been copied from a Penguin blurb; Jean Rhys's death-date is falsely given, both in her entry and in the index, as 1970, instead of 1979, thus casually depriving a writer who, we're told, "lapsed into obscurity" for many years, of almost a decade more; and the entry for Erica Jong, which you'd expect to be word-perfect, brackets *Fear of Flying* quite wrongly with Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* as embodying "the new physical freedoms" (*Yonnondio* is not about the "new", nor about "physical freedoms" — its point was that it was a book begun and mostly written in the 1930s, "suppressed" by its author's marital and economic exigencies). As if to confirm the carelessness of this particular entry, Olsen's title is also misprinted.

The rather slapdash treatment of writers makes me doubt the book's credentials in other areas I'm less sensitive about. It may, though, be merely a by-product of the editor's preference for more pioneering and out-going vocations. Women film-makers, by contrast, are given enthusiastic, convoluted coverage: thus we're told that "Chantal Akerman (1950-) that 'The Cinema conveyed by her films results from looking at things in a new way, without deception, through static space (long shots, often held after the character has left the frame), face-on angling and careful sound track. . . . Film-makers, perhaps, carry into the present something of the same excitement and sense of change in the air as the nineteenth-century women who broke into the professions. But what about women in TV and broadcasting? And what about Mary Whitehouse (a notable omission)? As we near the present the discontinuities between women's lives, and indeed within them, are at least as striking as the continuities. Women just haven't got themselves together and got on in the straightforward ways they seemed about to a hundred years ago. Ms Uglow sometimes appears to be struggling quite hard against this demoralizing suspicion. However, it's at least partly a problem generated by the dictionary format, which is itself a monument to the rationalist-optimist assumptions of that era. It's not at all clear how else it might be done, but certainly we need to acknowledge that women's entry into established categories of achievement has proved anything but a straightforward story. In the meantime our heroines go their separate and often lonely ways.

UP 11.15.80

Twenty for the Eighties

Hugh Haughton

BLAKE MORRISON and ANDREW MORTON (Editors)

The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry
208pp. Penguin. £1.95.
0 14 042 283 8

If twentieth-century poetic history has been written largely in terms of generations and decades, then it is anthologies that have been most influential in creating the public identity of each generation. The new Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Morton sets out to do for the present generation what Michael Roberts's *New Signatures* (1932) did for the 1930s, Robert Conquest's *New Lines* (1956) did for the Movement, and A. Alvarez's *The New Poetry* (1962) did for the turbulent 1960s. As manifestos of the rising young, these become in turn the tombstones to the dying generations at their song. They offer soon-dated maps of the "contemporary", validated by the tradition of the new, and provide the public with the latest identikit portrait of the poetic Zeitgeist. The fate of the earlier anthologies confirms our need for such composite identities, however fictitious — individual poems are hard to read — but also suggests that they need to be challenged.

This latest anthology is no exception. It has already been widely challenged — which is just as well, since what is at stake is the direction of our poetry, the terms of the poetic licence. The editors claim in their introduction that there has been a "decisive shift of sensibility" in the last fifteen years, following a "spell of lethargy" in the 1960s when poets lagged behind novelists and dramatists. The result is a "new spirit in British Poetry", originally launched from the North of Ireland, "marked by greater imaginative freedom and linguistic daring", and requiring a "reformation of poetic taste". The anthology has been designed to represent this renaissance and elicit that reform. The twenty poets it has included are said to exhibit not only "something of the spirit of post-modernism" but a "common purpose: to extend the imaginative franchise". In other words the shift of sensibility that has been "undergone" — poets are of course patients, not agents — is just what we have wanted: both democratic and avant-garde, a kind of Post-Modernist Great Reform Bill.

In the revised preface to *The New Poetry* Alvarez ruefully acknowledged a "discrepancy between the generally rather sober verse and the influential introduction". A similar discrepancy is evident here — though the editors (one is much more than the other) are just not aware of it. But the poems just don't bear out the claims. Most are recognizably the kind of poems that have been turned out for decades, some of the best have a great deal in common with the work of the previous generation, and very few look like posing a serious challenge to the conventions under which poetry is written nowadays (poetic revolutions are nearly always marked by changes in rhythmical imagination, and I see none here). The editors' decision not to reprint any of those poets who had the misfortune to be classified by Alvarez as "new" shows the historical record, anyway, and cuts out too many good poets. Even Alvarez, though not renowned for catholicity of taste, drew on the work of eight poets who had already figured in *New Lines*: the anthology whose "genesis" ethos he was trying to make obsolete. By rulling out Geoffrey Hill, Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes, Peter Porter and Charles Tomlinson — much of whose best work has been published since 1962 — the editors drastically diminish the meaning of "contemporary". Or are they implying that *The Whitman Weddings*, *King Log* and *Crow* are examples of the "lethargy" that overcame British poetry in the 1960s? The question illustrates the problems posed by this new version of recent poetic history — and the editors' failure to acknowledge some of the major figures excluded from their brand new ark, among them the most inescapably powerful contemporary poet, Geoffrey Hill. This has been an ironic

feature of the big anthologies since the war — their tendency to leave out the best poems, either because of length, generational lag, or prejudice (witness Larkin's and Enright's Oxford anthologies): if you look through them you will find little later Auden, nothing of Bunting's *Briggflatts* or late David Jones, nothing from "Funeral Music" or even *Crow*.

The twenty poets who are included are hard to see as anything like a single historical unit tending in one direction — even as defined by so vague a notion as "something of the spirit of post-modernism". The editors characterize them as follows:

Typically they show a greater imaginative freedom and linguistic daring than the previous poetic generation. . . . They have developed a degree of ludic and literary self-consciousness reminiscent of the modernists. . . . as a way of making the familiar strange again, they have exchanged the idea of the poet as the person-next-door, or knowing insider, for the attitude of the anthropologist or alien invader or remembering exile. . . . It is a change of outlook which expresses itself, in some poets, in a preference for metaphor and poetic bizzarerie to metonymy and plain speech; in others, in a renewed interest in narrative. . . . It manifests in other words a preoccupation with relativism — which represents a radical departure from the empirical model (of the 1950s and 60s) . . . it reasserts the primacy of the imagination in poetry. . . .

If you add up these comparative oppositions, you get both an inflated claim for the present and a systematic devaluation of the past generation (curiously, a conflation of the Movement's "post-war constraint" and Alvarez's "confessional white heat"). Was the poetry of the 1960s quite so grey and "empirical" as all this implies? Aud is the present so imaginatively anthropological? Individual examples suggest not. Do Peter Scupham and Christopher Reid show more "linguistic daring" or Andrew Motion more "imaginative freedom" than Ted Hughes after *Crow*? Do Craig Raine and David Sweetman show more "literary self-consciousness" than Geoffrey Hill in "Mercian Hymns"? Do Tom Paulin and Douglas Dunn write a less "plain speech" than the previous generation? Which poet included here uses more poetic bizzarerie, than say, Stevie Smith? Is Anne Stevenson really more "ludic" than Peter Porter? How does a "common occupation with relativism" result from a preference for narrative and metaphor? And is Seamus Heaney ("the end of art is political, more of a relativist than Philip Larkin") more of a live measure of our nature? The editors qualify their description by "typically", and no doubt individual poems correspond to particular characterizations, but I cannot be alone in wondering if this isn't a breach of the Trades Descriptions Act. "In the face of manifesto-making", as the editors properly observe, "a degree of scepticism is only proper."

Such a tendentious version of literary history derives from the desire to give aesthetic coherence to the twenty selected poets — and to promote the "narrative" mode of Andrew Motion himself and the new wave of Marxist materialists associated with Craig Raine (with which Blake Morrison has affinities). The introduction imposes the "ludic" poetic of the latter on the anthology as a whole — using Seamus Heaney as a prestigious unifying poetic godfather. The editors might have done better to compile an anthology of metropolitan "Marxists" — seven of their poets, if you include Medbh McGuckian and Paul Muldoon, could easily be grouped together in this way — prefaced by an aware of a great divide between them and the Ulster poets of Heaney's generation, whose affinities are with earlier writers, and I find it ironic that Heaney should be chosen as their patron — under the "British" flag of the title. His poetry exemplifies the convergence of personal memory (in all its interiority) and cultural history (located through the "auditory

imagination" and the poetic artefact); a stance far removed from the kinds of internal emigration preferred by the new wave. This may in part be due to his sense of belonging, the gravitation of his grave manner to the matter of Ireland as a whole. The British label sits oddly on a poet who "emigrated" south of the border, and indeed wrote the poems of *North and Fieldwork* there — "Viking Dublin" is the necessary complement to the northern bog-poems, a characteristic act of local piety. It is perhaps an embarrassed recognition of this which makes the editors choose "Leavings" — an autumnal picture of Ely, plump with reminiscences of Lawrentian Englishness, as well as an elegy for Catholic England — rather than such anti-colonial conceits as "Ocean's Love to Ireland" or "Act of Union". The anthology is much the richer for Heaney's genuinely exposed "Exposure", and his casually ceremonious, self-questioning elegy "Casualty" — but he seems terribly out of place in it, part of a different history.

The attempt to extend the "imaginative franchise" centres on four broad categories: the working-class (Douglas Dunn and Tony Harrison), women (five in all), the Northern Irish (of both persuasions) and Marxists (usually based in London or Oxford). With the exception of the last, these are familiar categories in the history of political restriction in Britain, even if the idea of the poetic ballot-box is not. Since all poetry is an attempt to broaden the terms of the imagination's treaties with the world, it is hard to think of poems as imaginative votes unless their concern is directly political — and only Douglas Dunn, Tony Harrison and Jeffrey Wainwright are overtly concerned with a reading of history to which the idea of the franchise is relevant (the women's poems conspicuously aren't). To speak of "franchise" where the licence of Christopher Reid's whole school of bourgeois primitivism is concerned must be intellectually suspect. All the same, putting Douglas Dunn and Tony Harrison together — they might be called The School of Bloquent Barbarians — is perhaps the most informative feature of the anthology. Harrison and Dunn are examples of upward social mobility who yet seek to invent poetic forms that are downwardly mobile enough to dramatize their identification with working-class traditions which have no place in the established poetic tongue, but without sacrificing their own literacy. Harrison, exploring "the silence round all poetry" quotes a Cato Street conspirator, "Sir, I Ham a very Bad Hand at Rhyming" — skillfully redeeming a misspelling as a political diagnosis in its own right (or writing). The editors are justified in making more of Dunn's recent, historically curious but noticeably absent in the other "new" poets. For Mahon unlikely subjects become occasions for wry ontological investigations; he writes most enduringly of displaced persons (like himself), derelict places, and obsolescent things — in his poems abandoned time, torcs, sheds, or gods become quasi-metaphysical emblems of man's place in the universe. The resourcefulness and intellectual passion of his poems "The Apotheosis of Tins", "The Banished Gods" and "On a Disused Shed in County Wexford" redeem much that is instantly obsolete about the present anthology. He is one of the three or four poets who justify its existence.

In the end, however, the anthology is likely to be seen as an apology for the final group — the "Marxists", Craig Raine, Christopher Reid and David Sweetman. It ends with four poets who "make it strange" — and its introduction is largely written with their poetry in mind. But though Raine's "Postcard" uses the device of an "alien invader", the poem is more a sol-fa parlour game than an exercise in anthropology — its appeal is precisely to the knowing insider who can decode its elaborate network. Raine's exotic similes are updated Anglo-Saxon riddles celebrating domesticity, rather than views from outside: the Alien is palpably the person-next-door in fancy-dress, and thrilled by the bravura of his disguise. Of course the tricks with similes played



"Oracular Sibyl" by Leonard Baskin, 1978; an etching and aquatint included in the exhibition of prints, drawings and sculpture "Honour to Leonard Baskin — a tribute on his 60th birthday". The exhibition has been shown at the Reading Museum and Ari Gallery and the Ulster Museum, Belfast; a selection from it can be seen at Leicester Fine Art, 9 Herford Road, London W2, from February 13 to March 20.

defeats. Jeffrey Wainwright's historical sequences owe more to Hill's example — though they radicalize it — but the fact that he is able to write an unironic "Hymn to Liberty" is a measure of his strange isolation in the anthology as a whole.

None of the five women poets makes a great impact, or seems interested in such histories — at least not on their showing here. Anne Stevenson's poems are sensitive anecdotes, letters, portraits; Medbh McGuckian's are domestic-exotic ruminations of the interior paramour; only Fleur Adcock's "The Ex-Queen among the Astronomers" is a piece of irrelevant, baroque, exotic playfulness, seems more "ludic" than diurnally "empirical".

Among the Ulster contingent — including Tom Paulin, Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon — the poet most admired is Derek Mahon. Inhabiting a bleak landscape of exposed backstreets and exposed headlands, he is a type of intellectual *bricoleur*, with a cunningly pragmatic approach to verse-forms and a range of historical allusion and philosophical curiosity noticeably absent in the other "new" poets. For Mahon unlikely subjects become occasions for wry ontological investigations; he writes most enduringly of displaced persons (like himself), derelict places, and obsolescent things — in his poems abandoned time, torcs, sheds, or gods become quasi-metaphysical emblems of man's place in the universe. The resourcefulness and intellectual passion of his poems "The Apotheosis of Tins", "The Banished Gods" and "On a Disused Shed in County Wexford" redeem much that is instantly obsolete about the present anthology. He is one of the three or four poets who justify its existence.

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by Raine and Reid have a serious intent — they research the "troop of objects" in the "museum of ordinary art"; they celebrate the "sacraments and luxuries" of the everyday world, composing a kind of sentimental urban equivalent of the pastoral idyll, a "peaceable kingdom" out of the "orderly debris". "Our deepest look at Reid puts it, 'is the Book of Job', through simile they reduce the world to a series of discrete visual puns, everything in this poetry exists to be compared to something else: 'as' and 'like' litter the pages of Raine, Reid, McGuckian and Sweetman like so many staples. Sweetman has picked up many of these marian mantras, but he seems less enthralled by them than the world they innocently celebrate. His poems register the shock of history, suggesting that pure visually is a false illusion; but in "Looking in the Deep End" he is still left fixated the "innocent game of green-glass chess" which conceals reality. The limitations of the manner of going against similes ("the perpetual trick of moralizing everything") it seems more appropriate to classify these poets as poets of the fancy — not of the "primacy of the imagination", not of metaphor even. The best Marjane poem (not included here) is Philip Larkin's intricately empirical, but also alienated, account of hospital visiting: "The Building": a genuine piece of reflective anthropology about the role of institution of our culture that everyone takes seriously.

James Fenton is a case apart. Though he is loosely associated with the last group, he is an independent voice. Both his baroque and surreal performances (such as "The King Fisher's Boxing-Gloves" and "The spare, inactive political elegy" and "German Requiem") represent a real poetic imagination, witty but coloured by some of the more terrible events of our century. Though the anthology, for its usefulness as a reference point, misrepresents recent poetic history, it will at least help to make Fenton and Mahon, as well as Heaney, more easily available. Fenton's "German Requiem" is one of the few modern English poems to stand beside some of the best modern German ones. It searches to define: "It is not what they tell. It is what they knocked down" — and says:

It is not what he wants to know. It is what he wants not to know. It is not what they say. It is what they do not say.

Gilding the unmentionables

Adam Mars-Jones

JOYCE CAROL OATES

A Bloodmoon Romance

615pp. Cape. £9.95.

0 234 02943 6

Joyce Carol Oates's new book is an outlandish pastiche of Victorian novels, a revisionist melodrama full of teasing detail.

The events which befall the Zinn family between 1879 and 1899 are melodramatic enough in all conscience. Deirdre, the youngest of five daughters, is kidnapped in full view of her sisters in an outlaw balloon of black silk. Being an adopted child, and of a somewhat difficult temperament, Deirdre has never been popular, but the family nevertheless dissolves after her disappearance. Constance Philippa, the eldest, runs away on her wedding night; Malvinia, the priestess, elopes with an actor and adopts his profession. Even Samantha, whose resistance to marriage has seemed absolute (since she prefers to help her famous father, John Quincy Zinn, with his experiments), eventually runs off with his lab assistant Nahum. Only Octavia remains at Bloodmoon with her parents, to make a suitable marriage.

All this Joyce Carol Oates describes in a gilded prose to match the Gilded Age, lapsing only occasionally ("emote", "best-selling") into anachronism. She includes real people in her fiction (Edison, Twain, Wilde, Blavatsky), and borrows experiments made by Nikola Tesla (alternating current, the electric chair) to lend to her creature J. Q. Zinn; she makes very free with Gothic props, what with blackbirds, supernatural interventions, and a pet ape that is all but human.

Her cleverness, though, lies in appropriating the Victorian narrative rhetoric for her own ends; her book relies entirely on hindsight, but is too busy to draw on it directly. Her narrator, although unnamed, is explicitly a spinster local to Bloodmoon, and yet with her alternate professions of knowledge and ignorance, her confident disclaimers of authority, her troubled avowals of the impropriety of proceeding, the *maternalism* of stopping short, she contrives to give a full picture of the Victorian unmentionables, not excluding violence, sex, spiritualism, insanity, feminism and the theatre.

Victorian hypocrisy, in this book, is perceived not as a flaw, nor even as a vice, but as the organizing principle of the century; hypocrisy which allows the same forces to prohibit as to gloat, to moralize as to gloat. With a puritan sense of duty the narrator pursues the Zinn sisters, adopting any number of incompatible and relativist assumptions while at the same time having allegiance to a set of absolute values; having it both ways, in fact, in true Victorian style. Deirdre in due course becomes a famous medium; and the narrator refers freely to "Spirit World" and its inhabitants. Octavia marries; and the narrator is enabled to discuss the *utitary* act of matrimony without loss of decorum, since its goodness is purged by the sacrament. Is this not orthodox?

Melodrama in any case depends on the evils that it claims to deplore, while inevitably dramatizes the arbitrary nature of style. The two elements, each of them threatening to appropriate the other, combine to make *A Bloodmoon Romance* a vigorous hybrid.

Joyce Carol Oates is least successful when her tone is broad and her point of view explicit. At one point the narrator confesses Hawthorne for his lack of feeling, in describing tarring and not (the tar being boiling hot) an atrocity, but in doing so she surely oversteps the authority of a post-romantic spinster. Another broad passage describes first the autopsy performed on Mrs Sarah Kiddemaster, which brought to light an astonishing patch of organs, and then the anticlimax of her crocheting at the time of her death; which measured

1,358 yards, or some three-quarters of a mile. This dramatizes atrophied overproduction far less successfully than the endless lists of clothes in wardrobes and trousseaux, and the shame felt by the indigent Zinns at needing a fortnightly and not a half-yearly wash; that absurd antimacassar is the invention of a mischievous sensibility inimical to the bulk of the book.

Another failed coup is the description of Constance Philippa's wedding-night, when she leaves a dressmaker's dummy in the marital bed; or after sexual congress does her husband detect the substitution. The point being made, that the sexual virtues of the Victorian wife (namely *immobility*, and the appropriate *contour*) were shared by the mannequin on which her clothes were modelled, is no bad one, but is better established by the self-subverting confidence of the narrative voice than by the disruption of a plausible story.

Victorian sexuality is in fact admirably dramatized in the stories of Malvinia, Octavia and Constance Philippa. As an actress, Malvinia is of course little better than a prostitute, and she does consort sexually with a number of men; but even in these circumstances it is taken for granted that the act will take place in total darkness, and that the woman will

remain perfectly still. Malvinia's own desire is intolerable not only to her partners but to herself, and she ascribes it with loathing to "the Beast".

Meanwhile Octavia is being subjected to a series of perverse assaults by her husband, but since she has not been taught to associate sex with pleasure, she does not construe pain and grotesquery as abnormal. In bed she wears a chemise, two covers, a corset (tightly laced), half a dozen petticoats and fifty yards or so of trimming; a hood is placed over her head, and drawn tight round her neck. Sometimes her husband beats her with wet gloves; sometimes he raps her bosom with a fan. Later in their married life he adds a noose, though he comes to prefer wearing it himself, and having Octavia (still of course hooded) tighten it for him. If she stops tightening (if for example he becomes unable to speak), he punishes her.

None of this activity prevents Octavia from regarding the *utitary* act as the *pangensis* of value, the *epiphane* and *pleroma* of life; and these passages, done with a very deadpan black comedy, are the most successful in the book.

No wonder Constance Philippa runs from the marriage bed, and her solution, which involves posing as a man and moving to the West, has an appealing thoroughness; particularly as it is clear that the difficulties of being

a woman in this society, forced to learn fancywork and Longfellow, weighed down and constricted by asphyxiating costumes, chaperoned, bullied and ignored, are hardly less than the difficulties of being a cross-dressed Western outlaw, expert at sharpshooting and stud poker.

When Constance Philippa returns to Bloodmoon, as *Mr Philippe Fox*, only to elope with her childhood sweetheart Delphine, she altogether flummoxes the narrator. Since she is behaving as a man, she must have become sexually male during her exile, and the narrator spends some pages analysing the causes of this genital transformation. Tight-fitting trousers, profanity and tequila seem the most likely culprits.

A Bloodmoon Romance addresses itself to a broad tract of history and to a great number of literary models, with varying results: its sensiveness, though necessary for many of its effects, is not always sustained, and its conclusion is disappointing. But it has a good many successes, and represents a real attempt to recreate a period which produced an extraordinary range of attitudes, from Emerson's idealistic fervour to Twain's bilious nihilism, and to detect the similarities underlying the differences; to reconstruct the nineteenth century with the knowledge of the twentieth, and to use only the original materials.

Doubling the ecstasy

Peter Kemp

JOHN HAWKES

Virginie

215pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.50.

0 7011 3908 0

John Hawkes's new novel, *Virginie*, is a book about eroticism that seems more concerned with doubling than coupling. Taking pains to mirror earlier models — from the troubadours to Georges Bataille — it also offers matching narratives: both recounted by Virginie, a girl in her eleventh year and at the eleventh hour of her innocence.

In the more contemporary story, set in 1945, Virginie lives with her brother in a rambling edifice on the site of a burnt-out chateau. Here, as her mother lies upstairs, mute and paralysed, Virginie witnesses "charades of love" acted out by five very different women. The story concludes with a dual climax: Virginie's brother makes love to her, and her mother, breaking out of paralysis at last, burns down the house — the flames of which merge into the heat of Virginie's awakened sexuality.

The other narrative takes place in 1740. This, Hawkes reminds us, was the year de Sade was born; and, accordingly, these sections both emulate and travesty his world. The situation is familiar: a group of women in a secluded chateau and placed at the disposal of a despotic male. But the atmosphere is, in all ways, less oppressive. Instead of the brutal conglomerations de Sade, avidly assembled, yartnerings are kept economical. His Lego-kit copulations are replaced by something more gracefully symbolic. There is more discourse than intercourse.

Between the two narratives, parallels proliferate. Lines and images are woven by an avenging mother — is the same in both. And the women involved in the erotic tableaux likewise seem counterparts across the centuries. In the 1740 story, they are endowed with allegorical names, Finesse, Colbre, Magic, Volupté, Bel Eclair; and delicacy, anger, magic, voluptuousness and wit are, respectively, the main qualities displayed by the five modern women.

The chief difference between the two stories is one of tone. Exuberant and surreal, the contemporary episodes are livelier. The eighteenth-century story, invested with an emblematic eroticism, is governed by the rigid protocol. Virginie speaks of the "passion for symmetry and need for

order" shown by Seigneur, the master of the Chateau de Sade. And within this labyrinthine dwelling, life is elaborately patterned. Even breakfast is a masterpiece of neatness: at a table decorated with three yellow roses, each diner is served with a large egg, a tiny bird, and a chicken's thigh, arranged in an elegant composition — the "golden thigh prepared and trimmed so as to be precisely the size of egg and little bird", "the yolks of the eggs . . . a soft syrup of flowing shades of yellow and orange . . . exactly matching the melting brass colour of little bird, thigh and chicken, and the three roses".

Visual rhymes and chromatic echoes of this kind constantly pull the book's material into shapes of weird beauty. And they also harmonize with the novel's insistence on balance as the essence of the erotic. Many of the disciplines Seigneur imposes are designed to curb excess in one direction or another: careless power is rectified by careful domination; the poetic is pushed instructively amongst the animal; debauchery is played against religious repression. In keeping with this concern for equilibrium, the prose often has the poise of a *peripeteia*: "Innocence is the clarity with which the self shows forth the self. Love is the respect we feel for innocence." And there are some very formal fables, such as Seigneur's allegory about the lover's progress from the Plain of Indifference

to the Citadel of the Desire to Please, where "Everything is held in its proper place, attains its balance and hence its meaning."

Not that the book is thinly diagrammatic. It is saved from this by the lush accuracy of Hawkes's prose. Virginie speaks at one point of "the clarity of my morning perceptions", going on to illustrate this by noting how the very veins in the leaves of all the greenery in the enormous stone pots lining the corridors reached my eyes as if in magnification, all those tiny veins as hard and sparse as the shining legs of little birds". This microscopic receptivity — fresh, inventive, and alert — pervades the book. It gives everything an unusual immediacy, whether Hawkes is writing of "red roses . . . so dark that they resembled eggs stripped into broad soft petals of purpling blood" or of "masses of interlocking althaea" or "from a disembowelled deer: it loosened . . . and developed shadows between this glistening mound and that; and then, in the slowest motion, began to slide away, slide down, flow from the cavity like a stream of cold honey from the lip of a crock . . . All that had been solid was now loose and soft. Intricacy lay at our feet in disarrangement. The doe was empty." Precise and resonant, delicate even in its accounts of the grossly physical, *Virginie* is not only a shapely erotic fantasy; it is also a work of potent poetry.

Paperbacks in brief

WILKIE COLLINS

The Hounded Hovel: A Mystery of Modern Venice

127pp. Dover. £2.40.

0 48624333 8

One of Collins's later stories (first published in 1878), *The Hounded Hovel* is almost all plot; in its short span Collins manipulates a large cast of characters through a highly complex and ingenious murder story. The style and technique are very melodramatic indeed; and though the writing is often mechanical, its central tones are interestingly and self-consciously ironized by the mysterious Countess Narona, who determines much of the action and is herself of an extreme and erratic temperamental. Her final revelation of the mystery takes the form of a synopsis for a play which is essentially this novella itself, but transposed into an even more villainous register.

DENTON WELCH

In Youth Is Pleasure

154pp. Oxford University Press. £2.50.

0 19281363 3

This was Denton Welch's second novel, first published in 1945. With no plot to speak of, it describes a summer vacation spent by a schoolboy, Orville Pym, at a country hotel. Not only does it evoke Welch's own adolescence but from the vantage of his brief invalid adulthood it displays an extraordinary intensity of physical reaction to a world from which he was increasingly isolated, and a sharpness of physical need which is rendered in a controlled, direct and economical manner. The novel's world is full of oddities — pet conifers, a dilapidated garden, buildings, bizarre bric-a-brac — but it is its most intense when evoking Orville's idyllicized yearning towards the robust ordinariness of a group of holidaying boys from the East End.

A.J.G.H.

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Fingers on the trigger

P. J. Parish

JAMES W. CLARKE

American Assassins: The Darker Side of Politics
321pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.90.
0 691 07637 5

The act of assassination is regarded as evidence of the insanity of the assassin; therefore all such killers or would-be killers must be mad. This is the circular argument which James W. Clarke seeks to break in this readable and thought-provoking study. Reduction of the explanation of assassination to such a simple formula is the result, he suggests, of a conjunction - almost a conspiracy - between the politicians' pursuit of expediency and the psychiatrists' narrowness of vision. It is comforting for politicians and governments to explain away assassination as the work of the mentally deranged, rather than as the expression of genuine political grievance. It is the predictable result of the professional training and cast of mind of psychiatrists that they should explain any deviation from social norms in pathological terms, and should focus upon the personality of the assassin rather than on other, external influences. Professor Clarke argues that the political, social and cultural contexts of such crimes warrant at least as much consideration, and he disputes the proposition that assassination is by definition an insane or irrational act.

John Hinckley's attempt on the life of President Reagan occurred when work on this book was almost completed, but Clarke examines the nine previous attempts (four of them successful) on the lives of eight different incumbent presidents, as well as three attempts to assassinate presidential candidates (Theodore Roosevelt, Robert Kennedy and George Wallace), one attack upon a president-elect (Franklin Roosevelt), and two other murders of prominent public figures, Huey Long and Martin Luther King. Such acts have become much more common in the past fifty years. On Clarke's reckoning, the only presidents since FDR who have not been the target for such an attack are Eisenhower, Johnson and Carter. Is there some kind of imitative or epidemic effect at work here? It is

worth noting that Arthur Bremer, who shot George Wallace, had read books on the assassination of Robert Kennedy, and John Hinckley was apparently much affected by the film *Taxi Driver*, in which the leading male character has affinities with Bremer. On the other hand, the random element in the selection of victims is illustrated by the fact that Bremer stalked Nixon before turning his attention to Wallace, while Giuseppe Zangara intended to kill Herbert Hoover until he happened to read in his Miami newspaper that Roosevelt would be in town next day. Ironically, Gerald Ford who might be a popular nomination as the most anonymous or innocuous president of modern times was a target twice in three weeks, while Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, the two most vilified and controversial of modern presidents, were never exposed to direct attack.

Clarke provides a biographical sketch of each of the assassins or would-be assassins, set in the political and social context of their times. He is at his best on some of the more recent cases - Oswald in particular (where he makes good points against the various conspiracy theories) and also Sirhan Sirhan, James Earl Ray, and the most unlikely member of this motley crew of murderers, Carl Walter, devoted family man and successful young doctor, who shot Huey Long in 1935. The treatment of some of the earlier assassins is less impressive, partly because the author's grasp of the historical background is often less assured. It is not just a matter of minor factual errors; it is rather, for example, that the whole attempt to demonstrate that Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was not insane or deranged but politically motivated and rational, rests on the portrayal of the president, not as a national hero but as a tyrant, "the unpopular Mr Lincoln" of James G. Randall's description, while his assassin emerges, not as a failed actor thirsting for recognition, but as a popular and successful actor, loved by all who knew him. This is surely to replace one gross oversimplification by another. Some of the evidence quoted from Booth's letters is in itself enough to raise serious doubts about his mental condition. The worthy objective of setting these crimes in their social and political context needs to be pursued with more rigour and more historical awareness than is apparent in this and some other cases.

The most interesting and important,

though not necessarily the most convincing, part of Clarke's book is his classification of assassins into four main types, on a scale which leads from the most rational to the most obviously insane. First are those ready to sacrifice their own lives for a political ideal; the extremist of a Booth or a Czolgosz (who killed McKinley) or a Sirhan Sirhan is regarded as rational, selfless, principled. The second type consists of those, like Lee Harvey Oswald, who act out of an overwhelming need for acceptance and recognition; they are anxious, depressed people with very low estimates of themselves, who seek to satisfy their craving for attention by projecting their problems on to the public figures who become their targets. Third are the psychopaths (or sociopaths), like George Wallace's attacker, Arthur Bremer, who find their lives so meaningless that they seek to express their bitterness in one destructive act, an outrage against society. The fourth type is made up of the psychotics, those who have only a tenuous contact with reality, and who suffer from major delusions - whether like Andrew Jackson's attacker, Richard Lawrence, who sometimes thought he was Richard III, or in the form of the belief shared by a number of such assailants that their murderous mission was divinely inspired.

One can only express admiration for this bold attempt to provide a typology of assassins. It succeeds in establishing the ground for serious debate of this whole thorny problem, it will have served a valuable purpose. But any such attempt to classify assassins into a few basic types must inevitably and quickly run into a whole minefield of difficulties. Even among his relatively small group of assassins, Clarke has to identify two - Weiss and Ray - as "atypical" who conform to none of his four types. With an honesty which does him credit, he admits that the two women who attacked Gerald Ford - Lynette Fromme and Sara Jane Moore - fit only very uneasily into his second category. Clarke also places Oswald firmly in his second category, and yet Oswald's record of political activism is not easy to reconcile with the statement that the "neurotic Type II assassin" is concerned "only secondarily with causes or ideals". Having emphasized the emotional problems of Oswald, Clarke has to play down the evidence of Sirhan's disturbed mental state - including evidence from his notebooks quoted in

the book - in order to stress his political motivation as a Palestinian Arab.

In other words, the assassins stubbornly refuse to conform to type. However, the deeper and more serious flaw in Clarke's analysis takes us into the crucial question of the relationship between attitude and action. In seeking to show that both Booth and Czolgosz were politically inspired, and not irrational or insane, Clarke asserts that "if their reasons for taking such extreme measures were irrational, then one must conclude that the thousands, perhaps millions, of other Americans who hated Presidents Lincoln and McKinley were also irrational". But the essential point is surely that these thousands or millions who allegedly "hated" Lincoln and McKinley did not translate their animosity into murderous deeds. It is the readiness, or the compulsion, to act in such a way, out of hatred, envy or craving for attention, that the charge of irrationality or even insanity must find its mark. It may be perfectly rational to espouse an extreme political cause, but can that rationality be extended to cover the decision to gun down a public figure in cold blood, in an attempt to serve that cause?

There are some facets of his subject which Clarke considers only incidentally, if at all. For example, he does not draw attention to the fact that six of the fifteen assassins were born (or, in the case of Czolgosz, at least conceived) outside the United States. Again, he does not attempt to distinguish between the various assassins or would-be assassins, according to the seriousness of their intent to kill a particular individual. There are substantial grounds for doubting whether Lynette Fromme or Sara Jane Moore really intended to kill President Ford. (The chamber of Fromme's gun was found to contain no bullet.) Did the two Puerto Ricans involved in an affray on the steps of Blair House seriously intend or expect to kill Harry Truman, or were they simply hoping to attract attention to their cause by staging a violent protest in front of the president's temporary residence? They were not even sure that Truman was in the building. (In fact, he was just settling down to a post-prandial nap in the room directly above the entrance.) Did Samuel Byck really intend or expect to kill Richard Nixon when he concocted his bizarre plan to force an airline pilot to crash his plane on to the White House roof, or

was he making some more general anti-government gesture? (In fact, he got no further than a cockpit shoot-out on the ground at Baltimore Airport.) Fromme, Moore, Byck and the two different category from Killen, the Booth, Oswald, Sirhan and Ray, who had their targets in their sights, and had no compunction in pulling the trigger.

Disappointingly, Clarke also neglects the possibilities of comparison between the United States and other countries. After raising in his introduction the question why assassinations should occur in a society with a firmly entrenched democratic tradition, he returns to the issue only briefly in his conclusion - and then in a surprising and opposite form. Why, he asks, have there been so relatively few assassinations when there must have been many people who shared the characteristics associated with his four types of assassins? Rightly, he argues that not merely must the inclination be present but also the opportunity - and he adds some sensible and persuasive remarks about the easy availability of hand-guns. Skillfully, too, he steers his readers between the two simplistic extremes of explanation, stemming either from exclusive concentration upon psychiatric disorders or from sweeping generalizations about violence in American society. But nowhere does he attempt comparison with other Western democracies.

One may speculate that, paradoxically, the incidence of assassination in America may be explained, in part, by the very openness of a society in which deference has never come easily, and participation in the political process is said to be available to all. The powerful cannot rely for protection upon the psychological or cultural defences which may surround them in more traditional societies. On the other hand, the fate of the outsider in a wide open society - or what believes itself to be a wide open society - is surely a particularly unhappy one. He may find temptation hard to resist when both suitable targets and, even more, the means to attack them, are accessible.

Professor Clarke has written an absorbing and, in some respects, a pioneering book on a grimly fascinating subject. He may not always convince his readers, but he will surely provoke and intrigue them.

BIOGRAPHY

Doubtfully democratic

Vernon Bogdanor

SARAH BRADFORD

Disraeli
432pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£14.95.
0 297 78143 7

"Disraeli", according to Buckle, "appears as a grand and magnificent figure, standing solitary, towering above his contemporaries; the man of fervid imagination and vision wide and deep, and a nation of narrow, pedantic minds, philistine, Puritanical; his life at once a romance and a tragedy; his death a splendid tragedy; himself the greatest of our statesmen since the days of Chatham and Pitt". Buckle's accolade, which serves as the climax to the massive six-volume "official" biography completed in 1920, would hardly be echoed by historians today. Indeed there are few Victorian politicians to whom the language of hagiography seems less appropriate than Disraeli.

The reality of Disraeli's career was laid bare in Robert Blake's ruthlessly unromantic biography published in 1966. Tearing off the veil of discretion which enveloped the official

biography, Blake showed that Disraeli's early rebuffs were as much the product of his raffish and dissipated youth as of Victorian hostility to a Jewish outsider. Far from nurturing a set of consistent principles during the unrequited years of Peel and Palmerston, until the expansion of the electorate offered the opportunity of putting the principles of Tory Democracy into effect, Disraeli was revealed as a political opportunist entirely lacking in either coherence of aim or steadiness of application. When asked what Tory Democracy stood for, Disraeli could easily have used Lord Randolph Churchill's ineffectual answer - "I stood for a democracy which voted Tory". Blake's analysis, indeed, did not hesitate to reveal the insubstantiality of many of the preconceptions which continue to animate Tory politics.

And yet the Disraeli myth survives. It was first adapted to the political needs of the time by Lord Randolph himself who persisted, against all the evidence, in regarding Disraeli as the Victor of the Fourth Party; while

Joseph Chamberlain and Leo Amery saw Disraeli's social imperialism as the only effective antidote to Liberal utopianism and Marxist subversion. Neville Chamberlain sought to enliven his efficient but drab administration of health in the 1920s by claiming the mantle of Disraeli for his sanitary reforms, while in the 1950s Iain Macleod carried Tory history to its *reductio ad absurdum* by asserting that the work of Tory Democracy had been inaugurated by Disraeli, continued by Lord Randolph Churchill, and was nearing completion in an administration headed by Lord Randolph's son.

More recently, Disraeli has been enlisted into the hours of rival Tory factions. "Disraelian conservatism" has been a code word for "wet", while Robert Blake had made a chivalrous attempt to portray Disraeli as a loyal supporter of the present administration. Disraeli's central concern, however, was the preservation of the power of the landed aristocracy, "the territorial constitution of England", and his ideals lie far from modern pre-conceptions. As for Mrs Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph, one cannot help feeling that Disraeli would have regarded them less as pillars of Toryism than as objects of satire deserving a place in his novels, rather than in the pantheon of Tory heroes.

Sarah Bradford wisely eschews such tempting speculations. Although she is not a professional historian, her biography is the product of wide reading and assiduous research. As well as the Huguenot papers which are now housed in the Bodleian, and a further collection of Disraeli's papers in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, she has consulted eight other sets of papers, including the Broadlands papers of Shaftesbury and Palmerston which were not available to Blake. She has not however consulted the Derby papers, an important source for the biography of Disraeli.

Her main discoveries relate to Disraeli's personal life rather than his political career. She has had the advantage of consulting the first two volumes of the Disraeli Project at Toronto University, with the further evidence which they provide of Disraeli's personal unreliability and political tergiversation; while John Vincent's

recently published edition of the journal of Edward Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, reminds us how late it was that Disraeli finally achieved political mastery, in that he remained largely subordinate to the 14th Earl of Derby until the latter retired from politics in 1868. It was indeed to Edward Stanley that Disraeli confided "with great apparent earnestness" his Zionism, in a conversation which struck Stanley as "the only instance in which he ever appeared to me to show signs of any higher emotion". And Ms Bradford has herself unearthed an interesting letter from Disraeli to his sister Sarah in 1849 which seems to show that he was not quite as loyal to his wife Mary Anne as has hitherto been assumed.

These tidbits are hardly likely to alter our general picture of Disraeli's career, and indeed Ms Bradford makes no such claim. Her main achievement is simply to have produced a reliable and well-written biography synthesizing the state of existing knowledge about Disraeli. Disraeli does not quite penetrate the depths of Victorian politics, and it will certainly not supersede Blake's biography. But it is just over half the length of his *Disraeli*, and the reader will therefore be safeguarded against Blake's Elbow, the affliction caused by attempting to prop up that massive tome. Amongst shorter biographies of Disraeli, Harold Beeley's account published in 1936 retains insights not present in later works, while Cecil Roth's *The Earl of Beaconsfield* (1952) remains essential for understanding Disraeli's Jewish commitment. Neither of these books is mentioned in Ms Bradford's otherwise comprehensive bibliography.

It is a pity also that she devotes so little space to the discussion of Disraeli's novels, especially as Blake's chapter on them is the only weak one in his biography. Indeed, the only valuable book-length study of Disraeli's fiction is in French - Raymond Maitre's *Disraeli, Homme de Lettres: La personnalité, la pensée, l'oeuvre*, published in Paris in 1963.

These criticisms, however, should not detract from the merits of Sarah Bradford's biography, which will take its place as the best work on Disraeli for the general reader who wants to absorb painlessly the details of the life of this most enigmatic of Victorians.

Positively psychic

Michael Mason

ELIZABETH JENKINS

The Shadow and the Light: A Defence of Daniel Douglas Home, the Medium
275pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95.
0 241 10892 6

There is a polemical note in the subtitle of this new life of Daniel Douglas Home; but the literature about Home is inevitably polemical. He was the most successful of all the Victorian mediums, and for the biographer of such a figure there is really only one question: was he genuine or not? The literature has, on balance, said "not". Elizabeth Jenkins feels that Home's denigrators have been malicious and incoherent, and some of the more careful passages in her book deal with such cases. But naturally enough this is not the end of the matter. The great question about Home, his genuineness, amounts to another great question: a metaphysical one. It would be an intellectually cold-blooded book which remained content with simply criticizing Home's enemies - and Elizabeth Jenkins has no intention of doing so. She presses the defence of her subject to the hilt. Her Daniel Douglas Home is a man truly possessed of "psychic powers".

Such a project requires tact in the handling if you hope to be taken seriously by readers who do not share your metaphysical beliefs. All proposals about supernatural agencies and forces must be seen to spring from the historical facts, and not from a prior affiliation in the author. Elizabeth Jenkins starts off prudently in her foreword:

To any impartial person who reads the very strong evidence for Home's super-normal power: his levitation, his fire-handling, his telekinesis, his appearing in supernatural light, it appears impossible to accept that these effects were produced by fraud.

But she soon - as early as the description of Home's birth - begins to give the game away: "he was on the cusp of the Zodiacal sign of Pisces; the subjects of this sign are said to be . . .". If this is not quite a case of an author describing her hero in terms which prejudice her verdict on him, it will surely seem sufficiently like it to alienate many readers. And once Ms Jenkins moves on to the account of Home's professional life this fallacy, so characteristic of arguments for psychic phenomena, is many times perpetrated in a pure form. The text is full of references to "powers", "communications", and the rest: the very things which are meant to be in question.

The book indeed betrays itself as written out of a high degree of partisanship for spiritualism as an institution, past and present. Ms Jenkins depends for her version of Home's life almost entirely on the three nineteenth-century works of unashamed propaganda for his powers: Home's own *Incidents of my Life*, and two posthumous offerings by his wife, D. D. Home, *His Life and Mission* and *The Gift of D. D. Home*. At one point there is a baffling reference to a "Dr George Zorab", an expert on "the present stage of psychical research", according to whom "it has now been ascertained" that ectoplasm exists. Hence the physical link between a "spirit hand" and Home's shoulder (deflected by a sceptical observer in an 1855 *review*) was not Home's arm. What is more, the admitted fact that "the substance [ectoplasm] has been counterfeited by fraudulent mediums" shows that its existence is "accepted" and its appearance sufficiently recognized to make an imitation intelligible. Such arguments indicate how very far Ms Jenkins is from understanding the frame of mind of an "impartial reader", or what is required to convince such a person.

But what of the more modest theme of her defence: that Home has been attacked maliciously and incoherently? It is true that the three biographies of him that have appeared in recent decades all take the view that he was no more than a gifted conjurer, and it is

also true that this view is essentially a guess. For the leading fact about Home is that he was never clearly detected as a fraud. He had a brilliant, verigenuous career in the aristocratic houses and even the courts of Europe - and no fall. But this may also be the only feature that distinguishes him from contemporary practitioners: he was, perhaps, the one that got away. If the fact of the general exposure of other Victorian mediums means anything about Home it must suggest that he too was a fraud (unless one resorts to a variant of the ectoplasm argument: all the charlatans were imitating the genuine article. Daniel Douglas Home). But these modern accounts are, rightly, less interesting to Ms Jenkins than contemporary attacks. Two in particular, of a widely different sort, she dwells on very fully, to some extent going beyond the propaganda of the Home family for her information.

Robert Browning was an inveterate hater of Home. He attacked him in various letters and recorded conversations, most famously in that very long poem, "Mr Sludge the Medium". Ms Jenkins is able to point out certain unimportant discrepancies in the charges against Home made by Browning, or reported of him. But she is mainly struck by Browning's vehemence in the affair, by what she calls his "insane vindictiveness". This is another familiar result of the credulousness, masking itself as open-mindedness, of temperaments such as Ms Jenkins's. With their hazy but never abandoned belief in "something" supernatural, they cannot grasp the experience of the person for whom such claims are unconvincing, or the pain that attaches to the associated sense of a perfectly material universe. No doubt this pain sometimes produces intellectual discourtesy towards the credulous, and even gets tainted with a perverse kind of intellectual satisfaction. But Browning (who anyhow resisted materialism) believed he was faced with sheer fraudulence in men like Home - a fraudulence, what is more, that exploded people's affections for a fond loved one. Ms Jenkins, with a great insensitivity to the experience of grief, suggests that Browning and other sceptics were vehement because they found death a disagreeable topic. One story about the Browning-Homes *seances* has it that Home simulated, with his foot, the phantom of an offspring of the Brownings who had died in infancy. (Andrew Lang, incidentally, argued that Home could not have committed this fraud because the Brownings did not have such a child: an exquisite example of the logic of credulousness.)

Much more sensational than "Mr Sludge the Medium" and occurring only three years after the publication of Browning's was the case brought against Home in 1867 by Mrs Jane Lyon in the Court of Chancery. She sued for the return of £60,000 of gifts, on the grounds that the money had been extorted by Home in bogus spirit communications from her dead husband. The Vice-Chancellor ruled that Home must return the money, but he also criticized Mrs Lyon's evidence, and instructed her to pay her own costs. He did not say that Home was a charlatan, or a fortune-hunter, though he did declare spiritualism a "mischievous nonsense". The verdict on the Lyon case presents Ms Jenkins with a quandary. Her hero is necessarily blameless, but also a man of enormous psychic capacities. Hence she implies her agreement with certain damaging remarks by the Vice-Chancellor to the effect that Home had dominated "Mrs Lyon: which, of course, was the gist of the plaintiff's case. Elizabeth Jenkins could have done Home's cause some harm if she had given evidence in Chancery in 1867. Her latter-day defence of him is not likely to assist his reputation either.

High Calceolus by Philip M. Williams, first published in 1979 by Jonathan Cape, has been re-issued, abridged and with new material, as a paperback (491pp: Oxford University Press, £5.95, 0 19 285115 2). The four main sections are: "The Making of a Democratic Socialist", "Government and Shadow Cabinet", "Leader of the Party" and "Epilogue". The book also includes a chronology, a bibliography and several pages of photographs.

State of the union

Anthony Quinton

EDMUND FAWCETT and TONY THOMAS

America, Americans
486pp. Collins. £12.95.
0 00 216519 8

This substantial piece of social description is pitched somewhere between the ambitious generality of Max Lerner's *America as a Civilization* (1957) and the chatty particularity of John Gunther's *Inside U.S.A.* (1947). Both of the earlier books appear dated now. Gunther is too arrogantly folksy; like an accumulation of boxed features from *the Reader's Digest*. Only an occasional snippet of fact goes beyond the political and for him politics is very much a matter of individual politicians. The handful of men who get into chapter headings seem very remote: Henry Kaiser, Harold Stassen, Arthur Vandenberg, Everett Ruess, Thomas E. Dewey. Max Lerner is dated by his imperial confidence. The America of Edmund Fawcett and Tony Thomas is an uneasy place.

To some extent they write from inside (like Bryce, the author of the best book of this general sort); they are journalists who have worked for the *Economist* in the United States. Apparently the book was written primarily for American readers. Its lavish physical production indicates its having been printed in the United States and its American title - *The American Condition* - is the way in which it refers to itself in the text.

Fawcett and Thomas note that Americans like statistics and provide them in generous abundance, but easily, in the course of their exposition, not in paralyzing tables. Here are some examples: three out of four Americans live in metropolitan areas; between 1950 and 1970 America's share of the world's GNP fell from 40 per cent to 20 per cent; a third of America's agricultural production is exported and four-fifths of it comes from one-fifth of the farms; seventeen of the twenty largest school systems have a majority of black school-children; only four of the hundred leading industrial firms have Jewish heads; ten per cent of children go to private schools, but two-thirds of them are at Catholic parochial schools.

The book is as pleasantly written as its fairly slender material will allow. Now and then there is a quiet literary flourish as when they write "the establishment moderates" thought of themselves as the best, but more and more they came to lack conviction". Or again, of the reaction of German Jews in late nineteenth-century America to the influx of the *Ostjuden*, "Were all the gains they had made to be compromised by these huddled masses with their funny clothes, strange dialects, and decidedly uncomfortable ideas?"

A very desirable qualification the authors possess is that they appear to like America and its inhabitants. Many remarks will be shocked to hear that they are lyrical about baseball and when they observe that American football is not much fun to play they imply that it is fun to watch, once you have some idea what is going on. On

this subject they point out that American sport is much less violent than it once was. In 1905 nineteen university footballers were killed. Theodore Roosevelt was moved to protest, although not in favour of non-violence. They also imply that American sports covers nowhere seem to approach the disgusting barbarism of the mob at the football matches in Britain. They defend criticism of American TV by asking: bad compared to what? They refer, with pleasant indulgence, to America's "spoil, happy children".

By and large the verdict they reach after their anatomy of the social, economic and political condition of America, is that, considering how old and stiff the institutional structure is, the patient is in quite lively shape. Americans continue to distrust government and, indeed, firm institutional arrangements of any sort, as obstacles to individual energy and energy about it and it breaks through. One point they harp on is that the productive equipment of America is not being replaced and updated as quickly enough. From time to time they insist on the need for another 5 per cent of the GNP, \$150 billion in other words, to be shifted from consumption into investment. One difficulty here is that the tax system favours investment in housing. Another is that the recent revolution in banking, which has made banks after competitive rates of interest to those with money to lend, has drawn vast amounts of cash into the secure, high-yielding money market.

No positive proposals for political reform are put forward although the

weaknesses of the system are examined in some detail. Both presidential and congressional power have diminished, Fawcett and Thomas maintain. This is not due to Vietnam and Watergate but to the advanced dissolution of the party system, itself a consequence of all sorts of social transformations; movements of people, industry and prosperity in all directions. For instance (more statistics), more than twenty million people migrated away from the land, there, in the period 1940 to 1960. Air conditioning made the new economic take-off of the South possible. But they worry about the fact that only half of those qualified to vote do so.

They carve their subject up into a reasonably exhaustive set of chunks: the regions; business, the family, government, party, finance, cities, farming, schools, universities and the arts, the law, the media, sport, religion, and, finally, the para-religions of self-government, health and psychiatry. Not only are those topics, they appear in *that order*. Their seems almost wholly random, with every natural connection ruptured, as if the chapter-headings had been stuck on cards, thrown in the air and then randomly in the order of their fall in an arbitrarily chosen direction. Is this an editor's device to prevent boredom or a textbook flavour?

There is nothing much about those things that non-Americans most immediately associate with America: organized crime, the movies, over-the-hill celebrities, the sex. Of less old, the whole melancholy culture of "senior citizens", and they have little to

say about the armed forces (except, not surprisingly, that many more of the black recruits than the white ones are high-school graduates). They are silent about the extraordinary boost given to American learning and culture by the great inflow of European artists and intellectuals under the pressure of fascism.

But although this is a large book, the United States is a very large country. It is neither surprising that some subjects should have been left out nor in any way oppressive. But the absence of human individuals is rather striking. Once in a while someone comes before us in person; Phyllis Schlafly, the feminist, Jesse Helms, the right-wing Senator. But the mention of specific persons is fairly rare. It throws into relief the thoughtless report of Marilyn Monroe's death. Asked about her beliefs she replied, "I just believe in everything - a little bit".

What particularly irritates is the serious and rather impersonal book's frequent flashes of sharp social perception. American papers are more national than they look because of syndication and wire services. (I once moving from town to town Abby and the Wizard of Id go with me.) Evangelical religion acts as a safety valve for prejudices that have been forced into silence. The payee analytical profession, down to 50,000 analysts, is undergoing its own little crisis (Freud was too much for a pessimist for America - a pessimist). American eating habits are "challenged", pretentious, fortunate and untidy. The large stock of "truths" and reasonable beliefs this book contains come in all sizes.

Totally Tory

J. A. Turner

J. A. CROSS

Lord Swinton
338pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
£19.50.
0 19 822602 0

Lord Swinton is not memorable. Born Philip Lloyd-Greame in 1884, and became Cunliffe-Lister in 1924 and Viscount Swinton in 1935. He was President of the Board of Trade in 1922-3, from 1924 to 1929, and in 1931; Colonial Secretary from 1931 to 1935 and Commonwealth Secretary from 1935 to 1938. Neville Chamberlain sacked him from the Air Ministry when public criticism of the Senator. But the mention of specific persons is fairly rare. It throws into relief the thoughtless report of Marilyn Monroe's death. Asked about her beliefs she replied, "I just believe in everything - a little bit".

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Britain. He became a Tory candidate in 1911. He won the MC on the Somme, then served with distinction in the Ministry of National Service. While still a temporary civil servant he took over the Hendon constituency and joined the British Commonwealth Union, a semi-secret political organization financed by heavy industry. Entering Parliament in 1919, he spoke for the BCU and the Federation of British Industries, but his political interests tended towards the land-owning, such as Edward Wood and Samuel Hoare. In 1920 Lloyd-Greame supported "fusion" between the Conservatives and the Lloyd George Liberals. In August 1920 he was given junior office at the Board of Trade. Disenchanted with Lloyd George, he joined the revolt of junior ministers which helped to overturn the Coalition. At the age of thirty-eight he was appointed to the Cabinet by Bonar Law, as President of the Board of Trade.

As a convinced protectionist he was frustrated during his first two terms at the Board by his party's pledges against a general tariff. Churchill at the Treasury did not allow him to turn the existing safeguarding legislation into a tariff wall. Otherwise, the Board under his leadership was passive and unhelpful towards the profound structural problems of British industry. At the Colonial Office Cunliffe-Lister, whose executive energy was never in doubt, tried to "put the colonies economically on their feet", with no perceptible effect. The pinnacle of his career was at the Air Ministry. His job was to get an air force of the required size out of the weakling British aircraft industry. In this role he almost over-ruled the part of a thriving executive minister. He made sure that the RAF

expanded rapidly. In so doing he offended the Treasury, the Churchillian opposition, the Labour Party, Lord Nuffield, and the aircraft manufacturers. Unable to defend himself in the Commons, he became a political liability, and was duly sacked. The rest was anti-climax. In useful minor roles during the war, and as an elder statesman of the Conservative party he won respect, but only from those who knew what he was doing.

For a man noted, in 1930, as a potential Prime Minister, this is a disappointing record. But for the Air Ministry, Swinton might easily be remembered as the man who gave us the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (in 1953). By forcing the reader to concentrate on administrative achievement in this way, the biography effectively conceals the man and the politician. We are, for example, told about Swinton's ribald sense of humour and caustic wit, but there are no examples of ribaldry, and only one joke. Evidently Swinton was an abrasive minister, but there is enough material in hints, aides, and undeveloped themes in this book to raise the possibility that but for the Air Ministry fiasco he might have been an early, and admirably formidable, Butskellite. Keen on economic planning, interested in social reform, an exponent of Fusion and George's economic ideas: here is somebody distinctive among leading Conservatives of his generation, even if all the ideas were borrowed.

Was Swinton representative of an interesting facet of twentieth-century conservatism? We cannot tell from this biography, and since its subject is unlikely to attract another biographer, we shall probably never know.

By Safe Hand

Letters of Sybil &
David Eccles 1939-42

The letters in *By Safe Hand* tell a story of wartime diplomacy and of love. Historians differ widely on the reasons why, after the collapse of France in 1940 and under great pressure from Hitler, Spain did not join the Axis, occupy Gibraltar and so close the western entrance to the Mediterranean. What decided General Franco to preserve his neutrality? No one is better placed to answer this question than David Eccles, who was the British Government's principal economic advisor in this theatre of war. Seen at close quarters in these letters are General Franco, Dr Salazar, Marshal Pétain, Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Halifax, President Roosevelt and many others. Sybil Eccles' replies draw brilliant vignettes of wartime life in an English village.

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**BODLEY
HEAD**

commentary

On borrowed time

Alan Jenkins

The State of Things
Camden Plaza

Through a desolate landscape a group of eerily kitted-out humanoids stumble towards the sea. Coming on a devastated church they stop to rest; a child among their number exhibits signs of "melting" and is immediately stifled. The landscape is post-nuclear, the humanoids are survivors, the survivors in fact, in a film of that name which is being shot somewhere by the sea on a deserted patch of Portugal. A half-ruined hotel makes a welcome if melancholy refuge for them; while to the actors in this ill-fated project it is a prison. Friedrich, the director of *The Survivors* (itself a remake of an earlier science-fiction film), has been filming for two days on short ends without knowing it, so absorbed has he been in his vision. "It's a wrap" shouts a technician, and the cosmopolitan cast and crew are shown settling into the hotel, cheerily at first, but with steadily deepening desperation, to await arrival of the goods promised by American Gordon, their producer. Neither Gordon nor goods materialize. Off goes Friedrich to LA to do a brisk trade in stock. He discovers Gordon living in a mobile home, his life a mad road movie, the plot a plucky but panicky flight from the hoods he has hoodwinked into backing his one venture into the European "Art" film. The old world and the new confront each other, achieve a despairing, fruitless mutual respect, and are both destroyed.

Just as the scenes we are vouchsafed from *The Survivors* stir subconscious recall of every science fiction disaster-epic ever set through or imagined, so the kind of artistic brooding that goes on around the bar and rooms of the echoing yet strangely claustrophobic hotel (where sea and sand have already reclaimed the swimming pool) reminds us of those films where a crowd of neurotics are cooped up together and cut off from the outside world. Among the memories stirred is that of *La collectionneuse*, Eric Rohmer's sharp little morality from which Patrick Bauchau, as Friedrich, carries over entire his enigmatic remoteness and authority; and Isabelle Weingarten as Anna the actress repeats her doe-or-audience-like impassivity from Bresson's *Four Nights of a Dreamer*. The others try to be as boring as she is, but she stays away out in front. If not exactly a trimming from the newer Germany—to borrow a phrase of Peter Porter's—this bit of the film does offer a few trimmings from the newer New York (where Wenders now lives), in the shape of Viva the Andy Warhol superstar, her pre-Raphaelite looks surprisingly unravaged but her acting ability no more convincing now than ever: her daughter, who can't be a day over eleven but unsurprisingly acts twice her age; and Paul Getty III, playing the young writer on his first feature, gulping at a bottle of Southern Comfort and miking every last drop of paranoia, insomnia and petulance from it.

The state of things so far is enlivened only by the presence of the near-legendary Samuel Fuller, growling and bringing something like peace to his role of Joe, the veteran cameraman who has seen it all and is mercifully recalled to Hollywood by news of his wife's death. The second part of Wenders' film is manic by comparison, ravishing us with the neon and ceaseless mechanized movement of Los Angeles itself; with the appearance of Roger Corman, of all people, as "young writer" — a lawyer "representing" not just Gordon but also, one supposes, the entire industry; and with Allen Goorwitz, as Gordon himself, a bundle of bustling sentimentality and seedy stoidism.

It should be clear by now that the film has only one subject: Film, or films and the people who make (or break) them. This implacable self-regard is

mirrored in detail after detail; in fact the film consists of almost nothing more than a narcissistic absorption in reflecting surfaces, very slowly revolving before us its own bleak, self-gratifying solemnities. In the process issuing an open invitation to knowlessness.

Made in one of the intervals of filming the troubled *Hammett*, *The State of Things* is not, declared Wenders — contrary to the speculations of some critics — his "revenge" on Hollywood or its "values". Rather it is "a kind of therapy" which "freed" him to complete his richly-conceived, seductively-executed story of imagined events behind the imagining of a story by Dashiell Hammett. And "therapy" is just what it feels like: not a talking but a filming through of personal anxiety about "stories". There is, though, much talk of them: prompted to speech by alcohol, Friedrich states his conviction that "stories exist only in history. In life time passes without the need to turn it into stories". What he means is that life lacks the shapeliness of "narrative". And towards the end (his end) Gordon announces that the loan sharks would have taken him seriously — would have spared his life, produced more cash — if he had only been able to come up with one. "Just give us a story," they told him, but Friedrich knows how much artistic integrity is worth. Gordon, anyway, had lost his credibility merely by giving a screening of a film in black and white. In black and white, "you can see the shape of things," says Mark the thoughtful leading male, and "Yeah. Life is in colour. But black and white's more realistic", ripostes Joe. For the time being monochromaticism allows Wenders some strong, serene and angular compositions in lights and darks as the camera crosses the crumbling hotel terrace, lingers on wrecked cars or dimly probes a room in Gordon's beautiful, shuttered, all-but derelict Portuguese house: rising dust in shafts of sunlight, one minute, Gordon's abandoned high-tech toys the next.

The sense of borrowed time, borrowed money (shadily borrowed: "laundered", in fact) borrowed ideas and borrowed images pervades the film. "A magnificent obsession", one of Wenders' characters calls it. Wenders must have thought so too, at the time, and it shows; it didn't for one moment in *Hammett*. One hopes Wenders knows the road he should take.

The decorative and the dowdy

Patricia Craig

The Return of the Soldier
Various cinémas.

The Return of the Soldier, published in 1918, was Rebecca West's first novel; with its topical theme and its moments of Georgian lyricism it is very much a product of the era. The soldier whose experience of fighting has rendered him unfit for civilian life is a common figure in wartime literature; outrage and moroseness being the usual forms his alienation takes. Rebecca West's Chris Baldry, however, regresses into a kind of infatuated fantasy. The second half of his life has been wiped out of his memory as a consequence of shell-shock; he imagines himself back with the primary romantic attachment of his youth, and summons the girl in question — now middle-aged and, according to specifications, plain — to visit him at Baldry Court. This causes some distress and annoyance to his disregarded wife. But why is Chris Baldry affected in this particular way? It is left to the sprightly psychiatrist his wife calls in (Ian Holm) to state plainly what's implicit all along: "Perhaps his forgotten life here because he was disoriented with it."

The past, as Chris remembers it in Alan Bridges' film, is sorely

End of an operetta empire

Peter Kemp

Arena: Last Waltz in Vienna and
Fräulein Else
BBC 2

Views of Vienna have been filling television screens of late. In an *Arena* programme, George Clare offered a résumé of his study of an Austro-Jewish family, *Last Waltz in Vienna*. Some days later, *Fräulein Else*, the dramatization of a story by Arthur Schnitzler, sardonically surveyed a group of *fin de siècle* Viennese. Visually sumptuous, each programme stressed the dangerous deceptiveness of appearances.

Rummaging through browning documents and sepia photographs — all that was left of his immediate family after the Nazi purges — George Clare put together an engrossing dossier on the Habsburg empire and its aftermath. The personal and the political were increasingly interlarded as he charted Jewish fortunes over an eventful century. First, he delved into the lives of his forebears of the 1840s, Jews just starting to abandon caftans, Yiddish, prayer-caps, ghetto-ways, in an effort to become assimilated. Austro-Hungary apparently offered them great scope. But as Clare displayed — unearthing crabbled and coded instances of anti-Semitism in such places as army career reports on his great-grandfather — there were warning signs amid the seeming emancipation. Behind the theatrical façade of Franz-Josef's capital, the stage was being set for the descent from Strauss to Auschwitz.

Much engaged with what it calls "the sparkling surface... hiding the decay", Clare's book regularly juxtaposes the Vienna of musical myth with the Vienna of political reality: it was in the Vienna Woods, for instance, that young George first encountered Nazi anti-Semitism. The programme followed the same approach. Lushly, it evoked the glamour of the Franz-Josef period through paintings and music. Then, with nicely attuned jarrings, scenes of the operetta empire were intercut with tinny newsreel of a more purposeful imperialism, the Nazi advance. Swirling couples gave way to marching men. Strollers in Ruritanian regalia — cockatoo head-gear and gaudy coats — were blotted out by subfusc phalanxes. As if it were

Goodbye to Berlin written by a Jew, *Last Waltz in Vienna* documents with great intimacy the decline of a city through self-conscious hedonism to civil strife, then terror and atrocity. The television programme charted the same route. And though it added no further findings — apart from the irony that Franz-Josef's titles included both Duke of Auschwitz and King of Jerusalem — it reflected and reinforced the book's concerns in a vivid, persuasive way.

One of Clare's preoccupations in *Last Waltz in Vienna* is with what he calls "the Austrian genius for hiding hard-faced decisions behind elegance and charm" — a trait also highlighted in *Fräulein Else*. Dramatized by Thomas Ellice, this story by Arthur Schnitzler himself an Austrian Jew — deals with the unmasking of hypocrisy. Likely to feel particularly strongly on the subject when writing this piece — *La Ronde* had just fallen foul of public prudery — Schnitzler devoted his energies to a desperate to preserve an appearance of respectability, an embezzler father and compliant mother nudge their daughter, Else, to importune an elderly and wealthy friend for funds that will bail them out. He agrees to hand over the money, if she will, in a sense, hand over herself by letting him peer at her naked for a quarter of an hour. Else fulfils her side of the bargain — but in a manner designed to expose more than her body. Showing herself nude to the old man in public, she also brings the naked truth about a luridly vicious world out into the open. During the libertine indignation that ensues, she destroys herself.

A sarcastic parable about the destructiveness of public pretence, the story had its impact weakened by a pretentious production. In the luxury hotel where events took place, everything looked sinisterly right. Serpentine curves of art nouveau decor matched the snakey behaviour of the characters. Lamp shades in artfully cloudy hues tinged the atmosphere with period decadence. Unfortunately, it was rarely possible to appreciate the fancy camera-work — wheezing golly around or freezing inexplicably on frames of no apparent significance — proved a continuing distraction. And most ill-judged of all, recurrent fancy sequences, full of coarse, Fellainian surrealism, were incongruously slipped into the film. As a result, a story that advocates the natural and direct was ironically, muffled under perversely trappings.

Kitty to the ill-dressed housewife who persists in idealizing. Her own wayward affection for her cousin complicates the business; in the film version of the story this is muted. As Margaret makes an anxious, alarmed, well-meaning Jenny; while, like Christie, as Kitty, looks suitably appealing as well as speaking of Margaret Allington with appropriate contempt: "That dowdy." In the memorable scene the shell-shocked soldier — ably played by Alan Bates — wanders benumbed through his own home while Kitty sits tensely in the disused nursery. But the film derives its quality largely from the performance of Glenda Jackson as Margaret; it makes us accept the inconsistent, the unwarrantable symmetry, the overblown feelings (doubtless a variance with the asperity of Rebecca West's contemporary journalism and criticism) that mar the story, and the contributes touches of humour to a notably unsatiric and unepigrammatic script.

The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911-1917, edited by Jane Marcus, has just been published in paperback (402pp, Virago, £5.50, 0 86068 318 4). It collects articles from the *Freemans* and the *Woman's*, essays from the *Woman's*, an essay on Mrs Pankhurst, a story from *Blast*, articles from the *Daily News* and miscellaneous pieces.

The celebration of compassion

Jonathan Keates

Certain artists have fallen notable victims to the uncritical enthusiasm of their age. First it was Correggio, who was never properly recovered from his misadventures led over him by sixteenth-century connoisseurs; afterwards Salvatore Rosa became the visual counterpart of every struggling gulf and beetling crag portrayed in Gothic fiction. The younger Teniers assumed for the Flemish the qualities of a smoking-pipe painter *avant la lettre*, and Rembrandt decked out Stiltonian elegance. Least merited of them all has been the fate of Murillo, named and admired as a fancy painter by the age of Reynolds and the artist of nineteenth-century France, but impatiently rejected in our day as the purveyor of candy-floss morality and barley-sugar holy icons, the decorative muse of Fatima, Lancelotti and Lancelotti.

Thus, with the Royal Academy anxious for funds to ensure its survival, it seems quite heroically audacious to mount so handsomely representative an exhibition as that of the "Immaculate Conception of the Venerables" was bought by the crown for 615,300 gold francs, the highest figure then known for a single painting at sale, the crowds would have gathered for a glimpse of the *Prodigal* boy cycle from the Hospital de la Charité or the lunettes from Santa Maria Blanca in their Napoleonic gilt splendour. Now it requires a degree of imaginative courage to negotiate the pallid of brown-hued apprentice pieces gathered in the first room and to penetrate to the witty and buoyant comedy which lies beyond.

But of the difficulty may lie in the fact that Murillo continually mocks and dislocates our conception of the Renaissance Spain as a society in rapid decline, morbidly obsessed with matters of domestic honour and the hypocritical issue of *limpieza de sangre*, drawing a slow economic knife through a series of fruitless money enterprises, its atmosphere thick with grotesque extremes of

poverty, hunger and sickness. Looking for the ascetic gloom of Zurbarán's cloistered saints, for El Greco's elongated, fluorescent martyrs or the prognathous Habsburgs of Velázquez, as though for some notional "truth", we come up instead against a painterly vision of overwhelming serenity and gentleness, celebrating compassion in its array of gesture, pose and expression.

Besides our impatience with an artist who chose to dwell upon this most universally acceptable of Christian virtues in a culture we prefer to associate with the indiscriminate

bonfires of the Inquisition, there is the problem of finding a style for him. He never left Spain and hardly ever went out of Seville, and though we know that he might have seen the work of various painters in the city's private collections this scarcely accounts for his extraordinary scope in both palette and composition. The tones of watery blue, emerald and white in the landscape background of two scenes from the story of Jacob, for example, evoke the luminescence of contemporary Flemish glass-painting such as that of the Van Linge brothers in the Oxford college chapels, while the line of balustraded arches on the

right of "Christ at the Pool of Bethesda" from the Caridad series, with a phantasmal onlooker craning over, is (like the entire ensemble) strongly reminiscent of Veronese.

Even in his madonnas, saints and beggars, where our ideas of Baroque Spain theoretically find their safest roost, Murillo displays an understated self-assurance and variety. The brushwork in his portraits of the Sevillian martyrs Justa and Rufina (sister potters who refused to lend their vessels to Roman idolaters) creates an improvisatory freedom wholly at odds with the implicit gravity of Saints Isidore and Leander on the opposite side of the gallery, in which the lines of robe, mitre and hands firmly anchored to the theological apparatus possess the cool severity of Italian sculpture of the period. The Virgin, meanwhile, tramps towards the empyrean, in the Escorial a transfigured postulant, in Seville playing yet detached at the Bellas Artes, almost a dancer above the table of Fray Juan de Quirós at the Archbishop's Palace.

Orchestrating each of these immaculate Conceptions is a sprawl of angels, lifting, catching, tumbling in a sublime weightlessness. Murillo's delight in these soft-fleshed, gurgling babies (their significance is so much more than that of mere hovering *putti*) ultimately releases itself in the anarchic exuberance of "Cherubs Scattering Flowers" from Woburn. He grasps instinctively the resilience and spontaneity of small children, so that his coarse-featured urchins scoffing chunks of bread and fruit are no more (perhaps even less) sentimentalized than their sophisticated Roman cousins in the early canvases of Caravaggio.

The exhibition has been cleverly devised so as to emphasize range as well as depth, and the choice of canvases, with the exception of a "Presentation of the Virgin" so hideously over-varnished as to be almost invisible, is an intelligent one. A batch of drawings serves to underline our sense of an artistic vocabulary in which facility could never be a term of opprobrium when supported by such an invincible strength of line. Colour is paramount even here, in the washes of sepia and bistre and the flashes of white lead against red ground. So unperturbed a genius as Murillo's may repel us by its very clarity and confidence, but a failure to engage must surely, in the end, rest with us.



Murillo's "Santa Justa", from the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in its catalogue (by Jane Marriot, 239pp. Royal Academy of Arts with Weldenfeld and Nicolson. £6.50, 0 297 781 94 4).

The masochism of the mistress

Ronald Hayman

August Strindberg
Miss Julie
Civic Studio, Hammersmith

Strindberg's *Miss Julie* is a bomb which fails to explode in performance, but seldom inflicts as much damage as it could. Of all the modernist duets which depend on the most strategy of presenting the playwright in confrontation with the audience, *Miss Julie* is the most. The count's daughter and the valet are both Strindberg. With his inescapable propriety, his inveterate masochism, his inescapable masochism, his dignity and his masochism, Jean has more than masochism, while Julie cannot afford to masochism with vulgarly she takes in his vulgar sexual masochism, in her lack of concern with her own impetuosity and, most of all, in her compulsive need to be degraded. The play could have been written only by a man who hated both the masochism of his own personality — but not his masochism, Strindberg was the son of a chambermaid; but in the summer of 1888, the year he wrote the play, he felt — a quasi-aristocratic

superiority while having an affair with a seventeen-year-old housemaid. With his first wife, Siri von Essen, who had been a baroness and who played Julie when the play was premiered in 1889, he felt alternately superior and inferior. Or perhaps both simultaneously.

Since Strindberg chose to make the play a fight to the death, the director should make it into a fight between equals. The explosion in *Miss Julie* will only be a small one if it is a foregone conclusion that the girl will no longer be the valet's mistress once she is the valet's mistress. According to the stage directions, the door is in the back wall. When Julie makes her first entrance, she will be in the dominant upstage position. Clare Davidson's production at the Lyric Studio is three-quarters in the round, and, as we go in, we feel, expectantly, that we are sitting down inside the kitchen. Christine is already busy at the stove, cooking something with onions in it. An appetizing smell drifts through the auditorium. Elaine Loudon and Stephen Rea do extremely well in their first sequence: a cook who is proud of being a cook and proud of putting food in front of the man she loves; the valet who complains with slightly too much interest about Miss Julie's way of dancing with the servants, and who is self-conscious when he tastes the stolen wine, rolling his chair which belongs naturally to Julie. Masochistically attracted to the masochistic Jean, she has to find a variety of pretexts for prolonging her

visit to this room, where Jean's "fiancée" is on home ground, and when Julie goes to Jean's bedroom, it must be in retreat from the advancing servants. Clare Davidson does quite well with the interlude she substitutes for the peasant ballet. Strindberg prescribes a groom and a kitchen-maid come close to coupling on the bed, excited by the intensity of their spite towards the high-born girl who is coupling with the valet behind the closed door.

But the biggest problem for the director is how to make the end convincing. Even in Strindberg's day, suicide would not have been the inevitable outcome. One of his models of Julie, he said, was Emma Rudbeck, a general's daughter who seduced a stable-boy and then became a waitress in Stockholm. Julie should seem incapable of taking that way out, not because she is too mad or too hysterical or too weak. What is missing from this performance is the stiff spine of sane pride.

The Father is a "private hallucination" disguised as a naturalistic drama and a work which shows Strindberg in his most obsessive and anti-feminist temper, writes Charles Marowitz in his introduction to *Sex Wars: Free Adaptations of Ibsen and Strindberg* (288pp, Marion Boyars, £9.95, 0 7145 2721 1). The other two plays included are *Hedda* and *Enemy of the People*, the three having been performed in Bergen, Oslo and London.

New Oxford Books Literature & Language

The Life of John Milton

A. N. Wilson

In recent years, Milton's biographers have tended to isolate his political and religious thought, while critics, sceptical of the old "biographical" school of criticism, have concentrated on the poetry. A. N. Wilson's new biography sees the man whole, and so enhances our understanding not only of his character but also of his poetry. £9.95

The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to the United States

Eugene Ehrlich
and Gorton Carruth

This handsome, heavily illustrated book will be the definitive literary guide to the fifty states, divided into five regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, Southern, Mid-America, and Western. Within each section the states are arranged geographically so that neighbouring states follow one another; within each state the listing is alphabetically by city. £17.50

The Oxford Book of Contemporary New Zealand Poetry

Selected by Fleur Adcock

This anthology of New Zealand poetry from 1968 to 1982 gives a representative selection of the best of the work produced during this period, usually regarded as a flowering in New Zealand poetry. The work of the senior poets, such as Allen Curnow, is well represented, together with a selection of James K. Baxter's late poems, but equal prominence is given to the younger writers of the seventies. Paperback £8.50

Old English Grammar

Joseph Wright and
Elizabeth Mary Wright

Old English Grammar is the standard work on the subject and is here made available for the first time in paperback. It is designed for students, and those who master this work will gain a comprehensive knowledge of Old English and will also acquire the elements of Comparative Germanic grammar. Third edition paperback £12.50

Oxford Slavonic Papers

Volume 15

Edited by I. P. Foote,
J. L. I. Fennell,
and G. C. Stone

Anglo-Russian relations, diplomatic and literary, are represented in this volume by further extracts from the Cottrell papers on the reception of Russian envoys in London and the celebration of Russian years in English verse. Two articles investigate the sources of Kievan and Muscovite hagiographical works, and there are contributions concerned with Ivo Andrić, Vyacheslav Ivanov and Danile, and a previously unknown poem of A. B. Shishkov. £17.50

Oxford University Press

037030943X

Taking the stage

Richard Langham Smith

ROBERT ORLEDGE

Debussy and the Theatre
325pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25.
0 521 22807 7

Some deliberation must have gone into the choice of title for this book. "Theatre" is a word with many shades of meaning. "Theatre people", as Debussy found to his cost, could be ruthless professionals who, brandishing contracts, treatably demand and his initial enthusiasm for a collaborative project, or who, as *metteurs-en-scène*, could drive a coach and four through his intimate and interiorized theatre pieces. Of the French theatre, in particular the Opéra, Debussy was deeply suspicious. Using his most virilic turns of phrase he criticized its every aspect. Nor did he spare the Opéra-Comique: "a tomb where all light is pitilessly extinguished". On the other hand he loved Covent Garden and never missed the opportunity of sneaking off to one of the variety theatres near Cambridge Circus.

Robert Orledge approaches Debussy as "a man of the theatre" and aims to give "as full and varied a picture of Debussy's theatrical experiences as possible". Many readers will doubtless be surprised at the extent of these and might be forgiven for raising an eyebrow at the idea that Debussy was ever much of a "man of the theatre" at all. However, it is in this context that the present author studies the composer: less from within, more from without.

Take the case of *Pelléas*, which forms a central chapter around which earlier and later projects are examined. An approach from within might begin by fathoming the symbolic interplay of contraries in Maeterlinck's play and continue by charting Debussy's responses in terms of the variety of musical languages he employs. Dr Orledge, by contrast, follows the Debussy encounter with the original play, and by quoting interviews and letters goes on to examine in detail the extant sketches for the opera, following the work through to its first performance and beyond. Vividly evoked is the traumatic dress rehearsal from which (according to the producer) Debussy "never recovered". Musicologists will find the author's piecing together of a chronology from the sketches scrupulously argued while the lay musician can delight in the admirably presented musical examples showing the composer's gradual forging of the central love-scene.

The book opens with a useful history of French theatre, placing in context the Symbolist and Parnassian ventures to which Debussy was attracted, and incidentally turning up a prophetic review of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas* as a play "awaiting music". There follows a chapter which, through no fault of the author, is ultimately frustrating. It deals with two early works which are almost totally inaccessible. One is the cantata *Diane au Bois*, the other the incomplete opera *Rodrigue et Chimène*. Orledge whets our appetite for both but we would be wise to wait until we have heard them before unquestioningly accepting his judgment that "Diane is far more restrained and prophetic of what is to come than Rodrigue". This latter, I think, will yield more links with *Pelléas* than might be thought. A few notes and accidentals in the *Rodrigue* quotations sound odd and students of *El Cid* might well disagree with the claim that *Peranules* is omitted, for he is surely the same as Don Pedro de Terruel.

The author's approach yields further insights along these lines in relation to other later works. Both *Khamma* and *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* receive particularly full chapters. In the case of the former, the relationship to Stravinsky is highlighted and the dealings with Maud Allan, an amusingly sketched in. Silky photos complete the picture and again we respond to Orledge's call to reconsider the work, in which he finds "superb structure".

So much for the more or less performable works. Interspersed are the most penetrating studies to date on the scrap-heap of abandoned projects which litter the composer's later years. Many of these were conceived with friends, such as Pierre Louys, their gestation and abandonment supported by revealing correspondence. These considerably amplify our picture of Debussy's all-important relationship with literature and form an integral part of the web of developing literary strands which made the composer what he was. There were Shakespeare projects, oriental ones, flirtations with the occult (a subject much advanced by this book), an *Orphée*, a *commedia*, even a projected version of Louys's gently pornographic *Aphrodite*. In each case we are given virtually all that is known about the projects. But though Orledge points out cross-fertilizations between these and contemporary instrumental works this hardly compensates for our profound sense of loss as we read of these might-have-beens.

Some trumps turn up with stage revivals of earlier works. There are some marvellously fey photographs of the *corps de ballet* for a number called "Spring", given at the Alhambra in 1914 along with a trick cyclist and a Chinese juggler, the score being none other than Debussy's *Printemps*. Our view of Debussy in England is considerably broadened by these iconographical additions.

Yet there is a fundamental paradox at the root of this book: Debussy was

Hearing the thoughts

William Drabkin

JOHN CRABBE

Beethoven's Empire of the Mind
135pp. Lovell Baines Print Ltd.
Hollington, Woolton Hill, Newbury,
Berks. £5.95.
0 94629 002

Most music-lovers will, I suppose, regard Beethoven as the first true Romantic composer, the first in whom they sense an important — indeed an essential — relation between the artist himself and the work he has left behind. The circumstances of Beethoven's life and his attitudes towards his fellow men, the arts and politics are things which, in the words of John Crabbe, "can so often be sensed just beneath the surface of his music".

The principal external and internal circumstances that have been brought to bear on our picture of Beethoven are not too difficult to identify: the political turbulence felt throughout Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century; and the composer's increasing affliction by deafness. A child of the Enlightenment, Beethoven left his native city of Bonn shortly after the overthrow of the French monarchy and lived for the rest of his life in Vienna through periods of open warfare and political — and, to some extent, cultural — oppression. The composition of a piano sonata in 1809-10 — the "Lebewohl" ("Les Adieux") — around a "programme" of the exile and subsequent return of his pupil and patron, Archduke Rudolph, can be taken as one example of Beethoven's concern for humanity working its way into the fabric of his music.

To be sure, Beethoven was neither the first handicapped composer nor the only one whose personal life was unhappy. But his deafness, which affected him seriously from the age of about thirty, must be taken as a crucial factor in the change from an essentially Classical, eighteenth-century style to that of the so-called "middle period" by which many important features of the musical Romanticism have come to be defined; it is still appropriate to regard works like the "Eroica" Symphony (1803-4), the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" sonatas (1803-5), the opera *Leonore* (1805-6; later called *Fidelio*) and the concertos and string

quartets of 1806 as marking the beginning of a new phase in Western music.

In *Beethoven's Empire of the Mind*, Mr Crabbe has sifted through the known facts of Beethoven's life to reassess the great composer as an early Romantic intellectual. He writes engagingly about his subject, moving quickly and easily from an account of the age in which the composer lived to essays on Beethoven as humanist, political thinker, literary critic, philosopher, theologian, and genius. Some Beethovenians may object that Crabbe's deliberately intended suppression of his own opinions about Beethoven as a musician; but from the tangled threads of Beethoven's life there emerges a picture at once sympathetic in its broad outlines and, appropriately, full of internal conflict and contradiction. The book is refreshingly free of judgments based on long-standing biographical inaccuracies or on anecdotes of doubtful authenticity. Most important of all, Crabbe's assessment of the composer's character in the context of early nineteenth-century politics and philosophy remains compatible with the thoughts which Beethoven's music seems to express.

But this is not a book for the Beethoven specialist; nor, as its publishers misleadingly claim, is it a really new type of Beethoven study. Many of its conclusions are congruent with, if not actually drawn from, the results of much modern research — above all from the work of Maynard Solomon, whose own Beethoven biography (1977) is itself in part a summary of some fifteen years' research into the composer's "mind". Crabbe's book can be read comfortably in one sitting, yet it will not hold up well as a work of reference: titles of German musical and literary works are often given only in English translation, as are crucial passages of text quoted therefrom.

Finally, I must object to the author's implication that we already have plenty of good books on Beethoven as a composer, and that "the musical exuberance" has been examined further from the truth. Since Tovey, a few books on Beethoven's music have addressed to the subject, and in some done justice to the subject, and in some piano sonatas, serious studies remain in short supply.

Pursuing pleasure

Peter Porter

PAUL GRIFFITHS (Editor)

Igor Stravinsky: The Rake's Progress
109pp. Cambridge University Press.
£9.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0 521 23746 7

It is hard to imagine an audience for this study of Stravinsky's only full-length opera. It is nothing like thorough enough to act as a source book on the *Rake's* many qualities, yet it does not contain much original criticism, either than a little of the higher showing-off. Since its first performance at La Fenice in Venice on September 11, 1951, *The Rake* has picked up strenuous opponents on its course around the world's theatres. Britten's judicious remarks that the music was assembled in the manner of a stamp collection, and that he admired the libretto (remarks which did not amuse Stravinsky), set the tone of much Anglo-Saxon suspicion of this unexpected gift to the English-speaking world from the twentieth century's greatest composer.

The Rake's Progress is Stravinsky's longest work and is, I believe, at the centre of his creative achievement, but it is undeniably a challenge to the temperament of most opera-goers. Today's post-Boulezian critics, of whom Paul Griffiths is surely one, are content to praise and analyse Stravinsky's music, and permit his and Auden's dramaturgy to continue to revolve in one of the inner circles of academic self-immolation. Operas by great composers have to live in the theatre alongside works by men who may be only composers of great operas. Thus *Fidelio* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* must justify themselves in action to survive competition with *Carmen* and *Andra Chénier*. *The Rake's Progress*, for all its seemingly unnatural elements (bearded lady, bread machine and unheroic Rake) is theatre *sui generis*, as I have always felt on the many occasions I have seen it performed, and as I feel almost as strongly when I listen to the music on records. Mr Griffiths quotes Auden's observation: "No good opera plot can be sensible, for people do not sing when they are feeling sensible." This is more confusing than helpful; it fails to distinguish between what will work on the stage and what won't, since people could do all manner of things more efficiently if they weren't singing, sensible things or silly ones. Song is the vehicle of opera, and artificiality and naturalism are only genres within that given form.

The public's suspicion of *The Rake's Progress* does not spring from the fantastic elements in the plot; nobody worries at Richard Strauss's predilection for women in breeches roles, though this makes much of the action in *Arabella* decidedly queer. Rather, discontent is centred on the feeling that three clever men (the librettists and the composer) are lecturing their audience, and that *The Rake* is an intellectual contrivance, and that it is Hogarth the moralist and not Hogarth the depicter of real life who is being followed. A proper study of text and music and decent familiarity with the opera on the stage will dispel this false view. *The Rake's Progress* is above all a touchingly human work, though with a strong anti-Palladian leaning. Griffiths's handbook gives little sign that this is his view of what is shared by his collaborators, Robert Craft excepted. We are back in the classroom — basic evaluation at the blackboard is topped up by paradox-peddling, chiefly from Gabriel Josipovici in his chapter "Some thoughts on the libretto". Much will be incomprehensible to anyone who does not know *The Rake* well. Surely a handbook should offer as basic ingredients the complete libretto, very thorough musical analysis and a full account of the stage action. Even the opera's planning and birth are more fully covered in the Stravinsky/Craft dialogues. Griffiths seems to have commissioned nothing specially for his book — everything apart from his own chapters is either somewhere previously and has been enlisted for the occasion. Musical analysis and stage action are crowded into his "Synopsis", where the real interest lies in his observations of

Stravinsky's dramatic use of key.

Much the best writing comes from the composer, reproduced from two of the Stravinsky/Craft books. Could anything be more to the point than this? "The Rake" ... offering nothing but so foolish as the concealed drama scene in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, or the post-stabbing coloratura concert a opera, to name two far greater operas, which, like my own, I love beyond the point where criticism can make a difference. "The force of love, incidentally, is what Auden bargains and Augustinian frigidity shines through the imagination of Auden and Stravinsky, two quite different persons outside the boundaries of their art."

Robert Craft contributes an all-too-short "Note on the sketches and two versions of the libretto". This should be read with Craft's and Stravinsky's other comments on *The Rake* since it otherwise quite cryptic. Here one encounters a few tantalizing lines from a prologue in rhymed couplets which Auden provided for "the second part" of the opera for a BBC TV transmission in 1958, in which Stravinsky apparently only sixty lines, as the Auden estate might have been persuaded to allow it to be reproduced. The "Performance History" chapter is fairly perfunctory, though a polemical than Craft's discussion of the Ingmar Bergman production is a Stravinsky colloquy. There are some stimulating notions in Gábor Jospovici's chapter, though the reader will have to fight with the syntax of his opening sentence: "No two worlds Stravinsky are alike, but *The Rake's Progress* is more different than most. Yet Josipovici does care for Auden and Stravinsky's work, and, by the end of his article, he is in the open and not just flapping his academic gown. His suggestion that the bread machine, that "excellent device" by which "the Rake" re-enters Paradise, is a "broad machine, the object, the scene, the music, the opera, is well worth pondering."

The graveyard scene (Act 3, Scene 2) has always been the favourite of severe commentators, and is embarrassed by the brilliant and classicalism of the opera's earlier scenes. Griffiths examines this scene in some depth, and does so well. Yet, in his last chapter, "Progress and return", he points out, interestingly, that Stravinsky's backward-facing progressiveness, he points out, interestingly, that Stravinsky's last aria, "I burn, I freeze", is the last time that character stays in the mind for an extended piece. The major mode as The Tempter's name domain is worth an essay in itself. He also comments that "the failure of great many twentieth century composers due to the fact that the audience's taste for the operatic has been consistently more sophisticated than the persons exhibited on the stage. Have opera ever been other than from the Florentine Academy to *Grand Macabre*?"

Malcolm Walker's slender bibliography needs one addition, an available to him at compilation, is an original Fenice production is available on a FontCetra LP set, usually exorbitant sound, but revealing how well Elizabeth Schwarzkopf and Anne's Act One aria "I go to him" remember listening to the extraordinary operatic birth right from Venice over a crackling tape, and I shall never forget the impact of the Brothel scene in particular. The A Major choros of love and pleasure, "The sun is bright, the night is green", with its "Lanterne magique" Stravinsky wrote "I wonder whether any poet since the Elizabethan age has made a composer. Such a poet would surely be more superlative to the challenge."

An illustrated companion to Stravinsky's works for the theatre, *Stravinsky on Stage* by Alexander Schenker and Victor Borovsky, has recently been published (£22.50, £6.95, The Bell, £9.95, 0 22609 604). It is a volume of documents in text and photographs, each of the composer's stage works, and includes synopses, cast lists, and a record of productions, together with illustrations of set and costume designs.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

From steam to petrol

Harold Perkin

T. R. NICHOLSON

The Birth of the British Motor Car 1769-1897
Volume 1. A New Machine 1769-1842. 163pp.
0 333 22764 1
Volume 2. Revival and Defeat 1842-91. 167-333.
0 333 28561 1
Volume 3. The Last Battle 1894-97. 163-306.
0 333 28363 8
Macmillan, £20 each or £50 the set (0 333 32717 9).

What would have happened to the British economy and society, not to say political democracy, if the railway had never been invented? Not such a hypothetical question since a dozen years ago the pioneer of counterfactual economics, Robert Fogel, raised that very query about the nineteenth-century American economy and came up with the surprising answer, "minus 6 per cent". More canals and better roads with horse-drawn barges and wagons would have kept the economy going only slightly less fast than with the railroads. Whether it would still have been the same United States from sea to shining sea is quite another question, which Fogel did not attempt to answer. But for Britain we do know the answer: the steam road vehicle.

In the 1820s and 1830s, when George and Robert Stephenson and their rivals were struggling with the massive civil engineering problems and consequently still more massive capital investment problems of the early railways, an equally intelligent and innovative rivalry of inventors and entrepreneurs were grappling with what at first sight, since it did not involve moving mountains, appeared to be the lesser problem of steam-powered road transport. Both railway

locomotive and the steam coach stemmed from the same basic innovation, Trevithick's high-pressure steam engine which, indeed, began as a road vehicle and carried itself up Beacon Hill, near Camborne, in 1801. With marginally better roads and a slightly faster development of engineering skills and materials to improve the power-to-weight ratio and strength of engines and boilers, the road steamer could have saved the country and the world from being cut up by fenced-in iron ribbons, cuttings, embankments, and tunnels, and the poor from being debauched in hundreds of cities and set down on the wrong side of the tracks.

As the Duke of Wellington said of another battle, it was a damn near thing. Two pioneers in particular, among a veritable crowd of steam vehicle enthusiasts, might have won it. Goldsworthy Gurney had a practicable steam coach by 1828, two years before the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened, and in the early 1830s he ran a short-lived service between London and Bristol at speeds up to 14 mph. Walter Hancock, brother of Thomas, the founder of the rubber industry which was to be so vital to modern motor manufacture, ran steam omnibuses in London about the same time, covering the five miles from Paddington to the Bank, including stops, in an hour. Both were claimed to be cheaper per mile than the horse-drawn public vehicles, and were far more flexible than the railways. In 1835 Hancock also built the first "motor car", in the sense of private "steam gig" or "phaeton" for three passengers, and anticipation of the modern sports-car.

These promising beginnings fizzled out under the difficulties of boiler explosions, transmission breakdowns, bad roads, the greed of the turnpike trusts, and the competition of the railways which, once they had climbed their mountain of capital commitment, could run smoothly on the high plateau of economies of scale. Steam on the

roads was relegated to the gigantic and unpopular traction-engines which hauled threshing-machines and fairground wagons and eventually led to the iniquitous Red Flag Act of 1865 which ensured that further pioneering in the field of mechanized road transport would take place anywhere but in Britain. Apart from a few experiments by rich and powerful zealots like the Marquess of Stafford and the Earl of Calthorpe, who toyed with steam cars in the 1860s, the birth of the petrol-driven motor-car was to take place in Germany, France and America.

The appearance of the British motor-car, therefore, was less a birth than an adoption. When Otto, Daimler and Benz in Germany, De Dion, Panhard and Peugeot in France, and Duryea, Pennington and Ford in the United States, had solved most of the problems, the British in the 1890s were averse to purchase the rights to sell and/or manufacture what was essentially a foreign invention. Enthusiasts like Sir David Salomons and the Hon Evelyn Ellis wanted the glory, and crooked company floaters like Harry J. Lawson and Ernest T. Hooley pursued the quick profits of a British-based motor industry. The tortuous story of the repeal of the (supposed) Red Flag Act, the Great Horseless Carriage Company and the first London to Brighton Run in 1896 are told here once again as a British triumph along the lines of Dunkirk — which, in the sense that the British motor industry lived to fight another day, it was.

This inordinately expensive book, at £20 a slim volume or £50 for the set of three, amounting in all to 506 pages at 9.9 pence per page, tells this familiar story in exhaustive but not very original detail. T. R. Nicholson is a motor-car buff, who has already published over twenty books on motoring history. As one might expect, the focus is mainly technological and legislative, on the engineering problems and political obstacles which faced the heroic pioneers, and how

his work gave great satisfaction. He was eventually dismissed for having married a "Maconese Whore" and become a Roman Catholic. Jörg gives us a full account of the life-style of the Dutch personnel at Canton and Macao. This was very similar to that of the more or less friendly rivals of the "Honourable John Company", as depicted in the *Memoirs* of the inimitable William Hickey. Jörg, in the only error which I can spot in this book, mistakenly terms Hickey an American — something which that thoroughly John Bullish character would not have relished.

Until the appearance of the Americans towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Dutch were the greatest traders at Canton after the English; but they were a long way behind them. The VOC never sent more than six or seven Indianes to the Pearl River in a given year, whereas the English often numbered about twenty to thirty; between EIC ships and "Country Trade". The export of Chinese porcelain to Europe was on a hitherto scale. Allen Catchpole at Chusan in November 1701, contracted for 534,738 cups, apart from plates, dishes, and bowls. Some 42 million pieces of porcelain were sold at the VOC sales in the Netherlands between 1730 and 1789. The Swedes, relatively late-comers (1732), who usually sent only a couple of ships a year, imported 11 million pieces in 1766-86. The Danes, French, Ostenders, and even the Prussians, all got into the act to a greater or lesser extent. With all of them, tea and silk were likewise more profitable and important than was porcelain. In several respects, Jörg's magnificent book gives us the best survey of the China Trade in the eighteenth century. It certainly amplifies and corrects the classic but by now inevitably rather dated works of H. B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East-India Company Trading to China, 1600-1840* (3 Vols. Oxford, 1926-29), and L. Denny, *The China and the East-India Company* (4 Vols. Paris, 1964).

they failed, or, later, succeeded in overcoming them. The author raises in the last few pages the question why the private motor-car failed to take root (his metaphor) when circumstances seemed so favourable in 1831-2 and especially (he says) in 1861, and yet did so after 1896, and claims that "the explanations customarily offered beg this question". His own answer, though more "complex", is entirely on the same plane as the traditional ones, however: the technological weaknesses of the early steam coaches, the badness of roads which were none the less adequate for comfortable horse carriages, the diversion of capital into railways which for long-distance travel became so much swifter and more convenient, the distraction of the unpopular steam road-tractors, the restrictive speed legislation, and so on. The only modification to the traditional view is his belief that only about half the turnpike trusts concerned themselves with steam vehicles and only a minority deliberately obstructed them.

What is missing from the story is any broader consideration of the social and economic context in which the competing forms of transport

operated. The rapid growth of the economy, the unprecedented expansion of the population, and its concentration in ever larger towns and cities, the consequent demand for transport of both goods and people which could not have been met by the old methods, the increasing cost of horses and the fact that horse-fodder production by the end of the century was taking up the equivalent of a quarter of the arable land, and above all the almost unlimited growth, given rising living standards, especially in the middle class, of demand for personal and local public transport: all these factors which came to a head in the last few decades of the century are ignored or taken for granted rather than explored and analysed. Technological difficulties and legislative hindrances are problems to be solved, and the ingenuity and vigour with which the Victorians overcame other obstacles to material progress show how easily they could have overcome the problem of mechanized road transport if they had seen the need to do so. This thorough and would-be definitive book raises the right questions but, because of its narrow focus, falls somewhat short of answering them.

Looking out to sea

David Geggus

JOHN G. CLARK

La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century
286pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £16.75.
0 8018 2529 6

During the last seventy-five years of the Ancien Régime, France's foreign trade increased five-fold, fed by the burgeoning wealth of its West Indian colonies, the commerce of the other not extensive local industry. It failed to develop strong secondary trades and concentrated heavily on importing tropical products for re-export to northern Europe. To try and recoup wartime losses, *armateurs* increasingly became drawn into the slave trade, which could be very profitable but involved high risk and tied up large amounts of capital for long periods of time. In the West Indies, merchants were able to charge exorbitant prices but were compelled to offer credit which planters stretched out with a creole disregard for the passage of time. Clark declines to say exactly who exploited whom, but he casts some interesting light on this vicious circle. Even successful voyages, he shows, could take over six years to show a profit. By the 1780s, more and more Rochelais funds were being immobilized in the Caribbean, reducing merchants' liquidity and preventing diversification into other trades. The port was in irreversible decline.

The book contains some excellent descriptions of business organization. There is a good chapter on marine insurance (already published in part), and the author breaks new ground in his investigation of capital provision and capital flow. The nature and quantity of the data mean that many of the arguments are speculative rather than conclusive. One wonders if more investigation of the European, as opposed to oceanic, trade might modify some of his conclusions. However, though the focus is often very narrow, Clark takes care to place his findings in a broad perspective. It is as a well-rounded analysis of the political economy of a port town that the work is most impressive. The text is marred by a rather clumsy style and the presentation tends to lack clarity. The proof-reading seems to have been somewhat negligent; French words are frequently misspelled. The index, however, is helpful, and the conclusion conveniently summarizes the author's many arguments and findings.

Clark places great emphasis on the baleful influence of the central government as a hindrance to economic growth. He details the way it sucked capital from the maritime economy and created arbitrary barriers

to trade. La Rochelle's municipal government was so burdened with royal exactions that it could never afford to clear the harbour of the silt that was progressively blocking it. The decline of the local brandy and salt trades can be directly attributed to fiscal policy. Every war was an unmitigated disaster and brought in its train a wave of bankruptcies. The loss of Canada and Louisiana hit La Rochelle especially hard.

In addition, the town suffered from certain geographical disadvantages. Unlike Marseille, Bordeaux, Nantes or Le Havre, it lacked easy access to the interior and the domestic market. With neither a prosperous hinterland nor extensive local industry, it failed to develop strong secondary trades and concentrated heavily on importing tropical products for re-export to northern Europe. To try and recoup wartime losses, *armateurs* increasingly became drawn into the slave trade, which could be very profitable but involved high risk and tied up large amounts of capital for long periods of time. In the West Indies, merchants were able to charge exorbitant prices but were compelled to offer credit which planters stretched out with a creole disregard for the passage of time. Clark declines to say exactly who exploited whom, but he casts some interesting light on this vicious circle. Even successful voyages, he shows, could take over six years to show a profit. By the 1780s, more and more Rochelais funds were being immobilized in the Caribbean, reducing merchants' liquidity and preventing diversification into other trades. The port was in irreversible decline.

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Crockery from Canton

C. R. Boxer

C. J. A. JORG

Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade 1602-1897
The Hague: Nijhoff. Dfl. 125
1982/9 0913

The original Dutch edition of this book was briefly noticed in the *TLS* of August 7, 1981, where it was stated that a more sumptuous English edition was in preparation. This has now appeared in the form of a "coffee-table" book, but one of the most scholarly kind. The numerous and well-chosen illustrations should not deter the reader from a careful perusal of the text.

Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade is obviously of great interest to the collector of Chinese porcelain; but it is also a contribution to the history of the China Trade in general during the eighteenth century, more particularly the period 1729-93, on which it concentrates. The porcelain trade, which was less important than that in tea and silk from the financial point of view, is here placed in its economic and historical context, and only on the basis of the rich archival material of the Dutch East-India Company (VOC) preserved at The Hague. The subject has been treated before, notably by the Dutch scholar J. de Hullu, in a series of articles published in 1915-23. But C. J. A. Jörg's treatment is both wider and deeper, and it is buttressed by his expertise as the Curator of Oriental Ceramics at the Groningen Museum.

In four chapters the author describes accurately the China Trade of the eighteenth century, beginning with the Chinese trade to Batavia in the seventeenth century, continuing with the direct trade as managed from the Netherlands under the reign of Batavia in 1729-36, and concluding with the domination of direct trade from the Netherlands in 1737-93. In this last and

most intensive phase, it was managed by the "China Companies", the leading light until their death in 1770 was the formidable banker and financier, Thomas Hope. Eleven substantial appendices give a wealth of statistical and analytical information, including a list of all the Dutch Indianes visiting the Pearl River, 1729-93; the complete personnel of the "Factory" (commercial agency) at Canton during the same period; profits and losses on the porcelains shipped direct or via Batavia; and a survey of the types and decorations which were in demand at different times.

Dutch tastes were usually rather conservative, irrespective of social class. The late Ming blue-and-white, commonly known as *Kraak-porcelain* ("Carack-porcelain"), since the original consignments sold in the Netherlands had been captured on board Portuguese carracks in 1602 and 1603, retained its popularity for centuries. Most of the porcelain was made at the kilns of Ch'ing-t'eh Chen (Jingdezhen); but it was contracted for at Canton, where the overglaze painting in enamel colours was usually done. Every year, lists were drawn up in the Netherlands, enumerating the types, varieties, and quantities that were to be bought at Canton. They clearly show the development of the porcelain trade as well as of the public taste. The VOC seldom experimented with very innovative designs, leaving the market for such to the "Export Porcelain" or *Chine de Commande* (export porcelain) which was shipped through private buyers who shipped their porcelain in VOC Indianes on payment of freight and other charges. The Directors (*Heren XVII*) did, however, commission some tea-and-dinner-services with the designs of the painter, Cornelis Pronk, in 1734-37, but they soon stopped this project as they found it too expensive. Similarly, in 1783, Willem Troost, a painter in the Loosdrecht porcelain factory was sent out by the *Heren XVII* to Canton, where he decorated porcelain after his own designs. He stayed in the City of Rams for nine years, and apparently

APR 15 1983

The containers and the contained

Geoffrey Marshall

RALPH MILIBAND

Capitalist Democracy in Britain
165pp. Oxford University Press.
£8.95.
0 19 827445 9

There is a set of rules for writing about the radical transformation of the State and Society that is not easy to acquire or to describe in the abstract and is best inculcated by example. Many of them can be inferred from *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, which could be used as a kind of literary manual or workbook by budding practitioners. From it they can learn much about the technique of radical theorizing and acquire some insight into the form of its rhetoric.

One characteristic clearly present in the analysis of the British state presented here is Thematic Simplicity. The narrative is straightforward and the outcome not a little said. The dominant class in society has for its aim the containment and suppression of popular pressure. As the stress of continued economic failure increases, several possibilities open up. One is that the dominant class will impose a more authoritarian form of containment on society. Another possibility is that the voters will endorse a programme of radical socialist reform and elect a government that will carry it out. This second

outcome, however, is an unlikely one, given the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms of containment and the proven disinclination of the Labour Party to promote social revolution. So a third possibility remains, namely that nothing much will happen at all, ever – or at least not until there is a strong and unambiguous political force on the left, which may be more or less the same thing.

As the analysis unfolds its form becomes clearer and a number of other characteristic literary and semantic devices can be seen at work. Amongst them are the following: Model Depiction; Terminological Adaptation; Generalization Rush; Tangential Assertion; Dialectical Leap and Empirical Stretch.

Model Depiction is well illustrated by the social containment theory itself. Society is pictured as a vessel or compartmentalized container in which pressure from those in the lower compartments is resisted by those in the upper. In depicting models of this kind it is important not to be too specific in defining the precise elements that compose it. Here the containing group is described simply as "those who run the state", "the people in charge" or "the dominant class". At a later stage however the author goes perhaps too far in the direction of particularity by itemizing members of the dominant group or echelon. He mentions (besides the Cabinet, the Conservative Party, the Middle Classes and the leadership of the Labour Party and Trade Unions)

church leaders, judges, police chiefs, the managers of state enterprises, lawyers, accountants and specialists in communication. The assertion that this group has a single and identifiable suppressive aim is a permissible assumption of Generalization Rush. The assertion that the dominant class – including the accountants – "constantly cross each other's paths in an incessant round of meetings, lunches and dinners" exemplifies perhaps a riskier variant of the device (sometimes called Generalization Gush). But the point of rapid generalization is to move the argument along as swiftly as possible to the point of Dialectical Leap.

In this process there can be seen the characteristic use of Terminological Adaptation in which familiar terms are given a technical sense. The word "celebration" for example is sometimes used in a way that deprives it of any connection with gaiety or merriment, to describe the cynical propaganda of the political establishment – as in "the celebration by the middle and upper classes of the improvements which have occurred in the position of the working class". The words "resonance" and "resonate" also may take on a radical sense only loosely related to the prolongation of sound by reflection or vibration, as when it is said that false beliefs about the independence of the judiciary have "a powerful legitimating resonance". Similar adaptations may be seen of words such as "prefiguration", "articulation" and "implication".

Terms of this kind are often useful

components of the device of Tangential Assertion. They make it possible to suggest that one thing may well be connected with, or prefigure, or work along with another without specifying exact causal mechanisms or labouring unnecessarily over the accumulation of empirical evidence. Many significant connections may be brought out or articulated in this way. In the discussion of Parliament's function as a buffer between the dominant class and the people the present text suggests for example that it is not by mere accident that there exists a resonance between Parliamentary sentiment and extreme right-wing authoritarian views. So: "It is significant that the most notable figure on the populist right, namely Mr Enoch Powell, should also have been an ardent Parliamentarian."

In the treatment of the suppressive functions of state agencies such as the judiciary and the police, gaps in the argument may sometimes be sealed by resort to Dialectical Leap. In this way there can be a transition from the suggestion that "it is possible to think of the police as serving a system of class inequality and domination" to the proposition that "the system of class inequality and domination is served by the police".

Dialectical Leaping can sometimes usefully be supplemented by Demonstrative Qualification. It may for example be necessary to show that the role of top civil servants in maintaining socialist governments is a crucial one. If it is argued that the members of the Labour governments of 1945-51, 1964-70 and 1974-9 have denied that they were constrained, a clinching qualification may be inserted to the effect that on none of these occasions did civil servants have to face a government with a true socialist programme. Still less in 1924 or 1929. So the generalization about the civil servants' role is unfettered. They may not have constrained any actual socialist governments but that non-constraining is irrelevant, since we know from containment theory that that is what their role is, and so that is what they do.

Qualification of a thesis indeed may not only preserve its validity but strengthen its impact. Judges in Britain for example are known to oppose trade union rights. On some occasions they do not oppose trade union rights. But that qualification strengthens the

generalization in the sense that it makes the general proposition that is so even more significant and resonant than it otherwise would be if enunciated without such demonstrative qualification.

There may none the less be occasions when resort must be made to this device can be seen when the Emergency Powers Act is viewed as part of the machinery of British capitalist democracy. An authoritarian regime in Britain, it is argued, is equipped to deal with disorder. Its cabinet may "assume such powers as it deems necessary for the restoration of order and the maintenance of supplies, or for any other purpose", subject to Parliamentary renewal of emergency regulations. This statement does not in a literal sense reflect the provisions of the Emergency Powers Act, which contain a number of restrictions relating to civil and industrial rights. But to emphasize these limitations would be to place the Act in a legal or factual context and to generalize about its use of power may be treated as true in an empirically stretched sense.

In the final chapter of *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* alternative futures are sketched out. An orthodox democratic theory (theoreticalist) has no romantic illusion. Since trade unionists and electioneers are indoctrinated victims of capitalist containment techniques, cast from behind a veil of false consciousness, cannot have any final value. So transformation of society in a fundamental and irreversible way is to be urged until the voters will not vote for it. But he freely admitted that the necessary government structures in for the long term are unattainable, since the Labour steadily lost electoral support by reason of the endorsement of Labour governments of the containment process. No conceivable Labour government will be sufficiently united to engineer a social revolution, and insurrection is fantasy. So beneath its characteristically radical theory the book is a study of its leading exponents. There is no knowing what this prefigure or lead to.

Gaulle, Rémond nevertheless in his own manner, maintaining an essential Gaullist conception of the state, the institutions of the Republic and the national flag, in spite of his claims to be in the line of continuity with de Gaulle, and in spite of a legend concerning him to Louis XV: "His liberalism is compared to the Guizot, and his insistence that the installation as President he would rather than ride in the streets of Paris places him with Louis-Philippe rather than with some more distant state, 'La nouvelle drolle', with his insistence upon culture rather than day-to-day politics, its authoritarian approach, its exaltation of the state and distrust of Christianity, its own have affinities with Action Française."

The obvious criticism of *Capitalist Democracy* is to say that it is a lucid and too didactic, dry, and too realistic to have been so successful. The reading will show that Rémond, invariably chosen his words with care and that he has usually followed the necessities of the moment. It is the present Gaullist book, Mitterrand, by attacking the constitutional powers of the President, to attack both the Gaullist and the Republic. Although this is to attack a fundamental to Gaullism, it is an acknowledgement of much that is exceptional and special can only be the distinction of this work, which places the unaccountable and eccentricities of French politics in a clear and meaningful framework.

Although he accepts that there is evidence to suggest that President Pompidou had his differences with de

SPORT

Down at Twickenham

Julian Barnes

Bill Beaumont

Thanks to Rugby
25pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 136750 2

JOHN GRIFITHS

The Book of English International
Rugby 1871-1982
40pp. Collins/Willow. £14.95.
0 02 18006 5

John Birmingham's humorous moral primer for infants, *Would You Rather?*, presents the reader with pairs of gruesome or embarrassing incidents, and then invites him to make a choice. Would you rather your grandmother fell into a pit of acid or that your grandfather was run over by a herd of pigs? Would you rather your house fell down in the middle of your lesson or that your pet rabbit escaped from your pocket during scripture? That sort of thing. The everyday fantasy-dilemmas of the animal child. Both alternatives are appalling, yet one is perhaps marginally less shameful than the other; and the embryonic moral decision the reader is asked to make is based with a certain masochistic thrill.

The book should be a set text for all those planning to devote their adult lives to following English rugby at national level. Would you rather lose in a bright spring day at Parc des Pucierres, or on a dank February afternoon at Lansdowne Road? Would you rather lose in the last minute because Ole Campbell kicks a penalty goal or because Dusty Hare misses and Would you rather a Steve Smith tackle which allows an Irish back-row

mauler to bully across the line, or an intercepted pass which lets a French centre run eighty yards and swallow-dive between the posts? Those who have supported England over the past twenty years or so have discovered that the calibrations dismay are indeed infinite.

Even the more basic "Would You Rather?" questions are tricky. Would you rather lose after playing well or lose after playing badly? (Not as simple as it looks: the connotations of aggressive contempt after your team has played badly shouldn't be overlooked.) And would you rather lose to Scotland, Ireland, Wales or France? This question naturally involves two moveable factors: the manner in which the other side is playing when it beats England, and the individual distribution of that legitimate racial prejudice which sport healthily releases. For myself, I have always minded less losing to the French (a really whopping defeat at their hands can be curiously cleansing, can raise you to a plane of altruism, make you feel a dispassionate spectator, a pure sports fan); Ireland and Scotland are almost level, though on balance I would prefer losing to a rampaging carol-headed Irish pack in the pouring rain than being kicked to defeat from sixty yards by Andy Irvine on a clear day at Murrayfield; and always, way out ahead, come Wales. For seasons now we have been assured that they are in decline: the platform isn't there, the loose forwards have lost pace, their only tactic is a Gravel crash-ball, and so on. But they're still quite good enough. There's always a key period in an England-Wales match (often about ten minutes into the second half) when their forwards look utterly secure, their tiny backs scud around contemptuously, and with a little burst of scoring (two tries, one

converted, plus a drop goal feels to be the normal pattern) they are suddenly way out of reach. Losing to Wales is such a regular agony in the year's emotional calendar that the occasional victories don't really ease the ache. Statistics may well indicate that England have beaten them twice in the last three years; but we twinned masochists know better.

The new season has already given the old questions some airing (television spectators, of course, have an extra band of Would You Rathers. Would you rather David Coleman pronounced England favourites for the Championship just before their first match, or that Gareth Edwards slugged off the English performance all through the match and effectively quenched any tiny hope? England's first match, against France, wasn't a classic for connotations of disappointment, but it had some very good bad moments: the disarray of the English front row, the lack of any line-out ball, the punting away of possession in the first half, the false promise of Camberabero's place-kicking, and the deceptive 9-3 lead at half-time (England can dispose of leads more skilfully than any other team in the Championship.) If Steve Smith's men do anything more this season than beat Scotland at Twickenham – if, indeed, they remain Steve Smith's men – it will be a considerable surprise.

Bill Beaumont, interviewed after the French game, thought there were grounds for optimism (though England's puny revival in the last fifteen minutes was really rooted in Gallic boredom; their plans for getting in the first pastis were evident). Steve Smith chirpily remarked that at least it was the French match that had been lost, since this meant it was still possible to win the Triple Crown (as if

that's what we were really after – none of this Grand Slam rubbish). Such daft optimism has, of course, always been one of England's charms as a team. So has a certain dogged-donkeyism (what sports-writers like to call "honesty"), a general lack of dirtiness, and a generosity in defeat (this last aspect, though often at the root of the supporters' despair, also ensures that the Five Nations tournament is a very pleasant event – unlike, say, soccer's lawdy home international encounters.) All these qualities – plus a high level of individual skill – are embodied in Bill Beaumont, the captain who took England to their unlikely Grand Slam win in 1980. (The Slam was, of course, achieved in typically, almost paradoxically English fashion: a romping win against Ireland designed to set up false confidence; a splendid sixty minutes against France, followed by a serious and committed attempt to squander the match; a deeply unjust last-minute victory over the Welsh XIV by three penalties to two tries; another giddy sixty minutes against Scotland, followed by a crucifying last twenty as the Scots managed to make a lead of thirty points to eighteen look quite precarious.)

When Beaumont left prep school, the headmaster noted in his final report that he had been one of the roughest, toughest boys ever to pass through his care – adding, "Roughest in the nicest possible way, of course." Beaumont comments, "Whatever that meant"; but if he doesn't understand, the rest of us do. As a Fylde, Lancashire and England lock he was already rough in the nicest possible way, a sort of rugby equivalent of Billy Wright or Bobby Moore. Beaumont was never a man – in that ominous euphemism popularized by the 1971 British Lions – to get his retaliation in first. He led by example, never threw the first punch, dived fearlessly into rucks, and kept going for the full eighty minutes. If Fran Cotton happened to be standing behind him at a line-out, he might just happen to rise a little higher than he might have done by legal means of propulsion; but then referees have to be kept on their toes for the good of the game.

Bill Beaumont's autobiography (ghost-written – or, more exactly, ghost-out from 300,000 taped words – by Ian Robertson) has the virtues you would expect from studying the man's

style of play. It's straightforward, honest, unfilly, and occasionally rough in the nicest possible way: the criticisms of selectorial inadequacy, or of John Dawes's performance as Lions coach in 1977, are like good old-fashioned hand-offs. There are the odd bits of colour – an account of Maurice Colclough vomiting on the pitch during a tour of Rhodesia; a description of the squalor of rooming with Willie Duggan and Moss Keane – but on the whole this is a plain, routine rugby memoir written by an admirable player. It doesn't provide any sudden insights into the game, or thoughts about its future (though there are dutiful sections on South Africa, boot money, and the current rules governing amateurism: Beaumont, by taking money for his book, incurs an automatic life ban on playing, coaching or administering the game.) Its function is really as an aide-memoire for the England fan who wants to replay his favourite nice and nasty moments from past matches. For those as yet unacquainted with videos of all England rugby matches, this primitive system known as the book is still helpful.

Also necessary for the true fan's gloom kit is John Griffiths's complete assembly of statistics from all England's international matches: teams, scores and game summaries, starting with England v Scotland in 1871 (we lost, of course, though not without pride: "While the Scottish forward was sprinting towards the English goal-line, Osborne folded his arms across his chest and charged into Finlay, both players reeling yards before falling to the ground.") Seemingly infallible on the past, Mr Griffiths only nods when he predicts the future, captioning a photo "M.A.C. Slemen, who is almost certainly going to become England's most capped wing." By the time the book appeared Slemen, without even the courtesy of a thank-you-and-goodnight trial, had been dustbinned by the selectors. Which of course starts off another line of reflection, and another game dear to the hearts of English supporters. If only the selectors had picked Slemen against France... If only that penalty of Hare's had caught a little more side-wind before it grazed the outside of the post... If only... If only... If only...

Round at Lords

Timothy d'Arch Smith

DAVID LEMMON and TONY LEWIS

David and Hedges Cricket Year:
September 1981 to September 1982.
40pp. Pelham. £9.95.
0 207 1429 X

JOHN CALLAGHAN

Report: A Cricketing Legend
20pp. Pelham. £7.95.
0 207 1421 4

RONNIE LILLEE

My Life in Cricket
20pp. Methuen. £7.50.
0 413 51410 2

RALPH BARKER

Abel: a Lifetime
40pp. Collins. £7.95.
0 448 29951 5

DAVID KYNASTON

Bobby Abel: Professional Batman
1981-1982
40pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0 448 29951 5

The first edition of *Benson and Hedges Cricket Year*, which hits the public with a new appropriateness to a Led Zeppelin album, is the successor, swollen by sponsorship, of *Pelham Cricket Year*. Over the past three years the book has been able to produce, within three months of the end of the domestic season, an annual record of week events from September to September, but to produce it at such a low price and at such a reasonable price is an achievement. For 1981-2, too, the book is being reissued as a paperback, and the next issue there will be time to produce a badly-needed index. William, as I have said before in these columns, ought to be looking towards the future of his book, not to the past. Test players (for instance Denis Compton) have run out their partners (for instance Illingworth) and have been deposed. Test players (for

instance Barrington) have been dropped for low scoring, but Boycott seems unable to shake off those mishaps. His personality like his batting is broodingly introspective, deeply self-critical, at times one suspects abnormally so. Alan Gibson, himself no stranger to the darker passages of the mind, once invoked Housman to describe a Boycott innings: "See the son of grief at cricket! Trying to be glad." John Callaghan leans over backwards in Boycott's defence and often with good reason, for Boycott's exploitation of the arc between backward-point and extra-cover, over the years, been a joy to behold. Each shot has carried with it to the boundary the message of Fowler (in his unswerving loyalty to county and to country. Yet he has been deposed from the captaincy of Yorkshire and barred from the captaincy of England. As far as Yorkshire is concerned, Mr Callaghan is able to show that Boycott has been hard done by as its subject. The committee who not only behaved badly on occasion but unconsciously. He can also prove that Yorkshire fared better under Boycott's captaincy than under others in the years in question; but it is a distressing fact that a secret ballot, initiated by Callaghan himself, revealed that sixteen of his team-mates preferred not only to have Boycott as captain but not to have him in the side at all.

Dennis Lillee's autobiography is unfortunately quite unreadable owing to the raunchy, gum-chewing style he has adopted for its telling; and this is a pity for he is unquestionably a great batsman. Those who are prepared to attempt a translation will find in his pages a profoundly disturbing anecdote to the detriment of English cricketing hospitality at its highest level. It is to be hoped that Lillee is exaggerating but I must confess it is not the first time I have heard of shunshunshun from this august and, it was to be hoped, well-affected headquarters.

Ralph Barker's *Innings of a Lifetime* is a selection of ten modern Test innings from Cowdrey's predictable 102 in Australia in 1954-5 to Randall's improbable 174 in the same county twenty-two years later. It is a truism that a batsman selected to play in a Test should have, if not the form, at least the potential to play a long innings –

that after all is what selectors are for – but Mr Barker has revived memories of a West Indies tour when there was absolutely no reason to suppose that one player, David Holford, would perform other than indifferently. Indeed it was impossible to find any record of his previous form, good or otherwise. Yet he came over with the 1966 side captained by Sobers and at Lord's joined his captain, and incidentally (I need to emphasize the point) his cousin, with the second innings total on 95-5. Scoring a century he helped to put on 274 for the sixth wicket and to save the match for his country. This lone ascendancy to genius in batsmen is surely rare. It happens to bowlers: Fowler (in different, but in his day barely less exalted, circumstances); Massie; and very likely Mudassar Nazar. Holford's innings may be unique.

David Kynaston's book on Bobby Abel is as professional as its subject. Abel learned his skills on rough commons and street pitches (as did his bowling colleague, Lohmann, who was also none the worse for that) and arrived at the Oval at a time when, partly through her favouring of amateurs, Surrey had got herself into pretty low waters. A neat, small opening but who once made a triple century and who played for England thirteen times. Abel showed especial preference for his home ground, Small wonder, since its wickets, if not actually doctored, were treated at the period with two non-indigenous nostrums – clay and cow-dung – delivered covertly at dawn under tarpaulins. He was the idol of the tough and occasionally unmanageable Surrey crowds. Of special interest is Mr Kynaston's analysis of Abel's style, his strengths and weaknesses, like Boycott a poor judge of a run and, unlike him, inclined to very cross-batted, he was an immensely strong cutter – perhaps the reason he appeared to draw away from really fast bowling – and was only caught in the deep once in a blue moon. Kynaston has plenty to say too of the shady goings-on in Abel's time, of the amateurs going off, grouse-shooting, while Abel was left to practise his strokes in his hotel room mirror, of "shamateurism", of general neglect of the professionals and their financial well-being.

Up in the Alps

Ronald Faux

ARTHUR ROTH

Eiger: Wall of Death
30pp. Gollancz. £9.95.
0 575 03087 9

There are a few mountain stories that stand repetition because of their quality as pure adventures and their appeal to non-mountaineers. The north wall of the Eiger is pre-eminently in this category and like Everest's its history keeps growing. The wall is well known even to lounge-lizards who suffer vertigo on a thick carpet. The notion of anyone electing to clamber up a mile-high mass of rock and ice while belligerent nature hurls down avalanches of boulders and snow indiscriminately, suggests an intriguing level of madness. Yet over the years there has been no shortage of climbers to make the attempt. Many have succeeded but an appalling number have perished.

The definitive history of the wall was Heinrich Harrer's *The White Spider*, a title taken from the shape of a snowfield high on the face that has woe-like tendrils of ice. Harrer was a member of the German-Austrian team that first climbed the face in 1938 and, as one who had been there, allowed the story to tell itself. Arthur Roth, an American writer currently collaborating with his twelve-year son on a climbing guide to the Long Island railroad bridges, in *Eiger – Wall of Death* gives the most notorious wall in the Alps the Hollywood treatment. Mr Roth combed the numerous books that have already covered the Eiger story and sent out an extensive

questionnaire to mountaineers who had climbed the face. The threads have all been drawn together in one story which is enthralling in its detail. Its main interest lies in the gossip and speculation Roth introduces throughout the story and the attention to small poignant detail. During the famous rescue of the Italian, Claudio Corti, Roth notes that his leather crampon straps had been torn off the Italian, in his hunger, had obviously eaten them. On the bivouac ledge where he had been trapped for days there was no trace of snow or ice within reach. Corti's lips were blackened and split from frost and dehydration and half a dozen of his teeth were splintered from having bitten at the ice. Further down the face, Stefano Longhi lay trapped on another ledge. Rescuers heard his cries of "Famel! Fydel!" through the swirling hiss of snow-whipped air. The next day, after nine nights on the face, his body was seen hanging from his ropes below the ledge, "his forward-tilting head already married to the rock face by a thin casque of ice".

It is a grim history but, perhaps, as Roth points out, the worst is over. More people now climb the face; but fewer are killed. Better radio communication, more accurate weather forecasting, greater knowledge of diet and the physical effects of cold and altitude, improved climbing equipment, fitter climbers and helicopter rescue that may guarantee a hospital bed within minutes of falling off, have all conspired to make the Eiger north wall, which over the years has claimed forty-four victims, far less a "wall of death".

Driven by disappointment

Michael Banton

ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN

Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action
138pp. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
£9.95.
0 85520 487 7

In 1968 Paris – like many other university cities – was in turmoil. In 1978, when, in Paris, Albert O. Hirschman started work on this essay, all was quiet. No one has yet furnished a satisfying explanation of why there was such a burst of activity in 1968, or of what could cause changes of this kind. Professor Hirschman has a novel interpretation: "acts of consumption... which are undertaken because they are expected to yield satisfaction, also yield disappointment or dissatisfaction." Man is distinguished from other animals by his insatiability, by his capacity to formulate goals, and since these cannot all be attained, by his mistakes and disappointments: "the quintessential deception to which humans are subject is that of the hopes they themselves fabricate." When a generation of people concentrate upon the search for private satisfaction, they are inevitably disappointed and turn instead to public affairs, believing that in this other realm they can capture what has eluded them. Then when enthusiasm for public pursuits is dashed, they swing back to private ones.

If the reader is persuaded by this it is only because Hirschman never documents with any precision the changes that have to be explained. He writes of "the wide swings in behaviour – from utter privatization to total absorption in public causes and back" as if he had established their occurrence. Yet if there are cycles in, for example, the proportion of electors who choose to cast their votes, they are scarcely wide swings. The events of 1968 appear to have been the work of a particular generation, many of whom are carrying a distinctive view of political affairs with them still. According to *New Society* (November 25, 1982) the English representatives of this generation are now the "squeezed radicals" caught between older and younger generations who do not share their opinions. Thus the quiescence of 1978 can plausibly be attributed to the entry of a new cohort rather than to any great change on the part of a previous generation.

Hirschman is critical of any

assumption that the consumer carries within himself a universe of wants of known intensity that he matches against prices. He rejects over-simple conceptions of tastes, such as those which ignore people's ability to change their tastes (as by deciding to stop smoking). Yet he himself does not reflect upon the manner in which people learn to have tastes. Conventional economic analysis need not consider why there is a demand for cigarettes and whisky and fashionable clothes; it can assume that it expresses underlying tastes. An analysis of disappointment, however, has to look further. Does a young man really want nicotine or alcohol, or does he want the esteem of his peers? How much has he to consume to get that esteem? At what point do they think he has overdone it and begin to show disapproval? The social processes which teach people to have wants also teach them how much they should aspire to. In any competitive system the great majority of people rapidly decide that it is no use their aiming at the very highest positions. They set their sights on attaining and in this way guard against disappointment. This is also evident with regard to the demand for consumer durables which Hirschman regards as the goods most productive of disappointment.

Mary Douglas has offered useful guidance on these questions in her recent book with Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods*. Faced with the greatest of all tasks, that of giving meaning to their existence, people divide up time (as by constructing a calendar which celebrates in orderly fashion the events and relationships of greatest importance), they differentiate space (as by rules of territorial possession), and they build order in the social relations of kinship and seniority. The motivation to work and the sense of satisfaction spring from the meanings which culture vests in activities by arranging them in larger sequences and patterns. Goods are a vital part of culture; though they themselves are neutral their uses are saturated with meanings because they bring people together in groups and separate them from other persons.

As other anthropological studies have shown, in many societies the desire for goods is limited by the fear of envy which finds expression in, for example, witchcraft beliefs. Some hunter-gatherer groups are so structured that no one person can acquire more power over any other. Thus among the Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari the average working week

(excluding cooking and the preparation of implements) is but fifteen hours; the rest of the time is spent visiting and entertaining. Among the Hadza, men spend far more time gambling than in obtaining food. Because their material wants are limited, such people live in "a kind of material plenty". In Marshall Sahlins's phrase, these are the original affluent societies.

Men are not insatiable by nature, though they may be made so by their cultures. In societies of larger scale than the hunter-gatherers property in animals, land and persons is the substance of competition between lineages. More cattle bring more brides, more children and greater power for the descent group. Maybe one characteristic of these societies is that disappointment centres upon people rather than upon possessions. In our own allegedly materialistic society also there is plenty of evidence that tells against the insatiability thesis and is indicative of concern with personal obligation. So who, one wonders, are the sort of people Hirschman has in mind when he writes that disappointment implies some prior mistaken decision or choice? They sound like affluent young Californians, Texans or New Yorkers who have such a wide range of alternatives before them that they are touched by *anomie*. In Mary Douglas's terms they are part of that top class of people who seek "information goods" and have access to circles in which you know may be more important than what you know. Can these really be people who cause a swing from a phase of private to one of public pursuits? If there are any such swings may they not be more closely associated with the difficulty of socializing people to live in rapidly changing societies?

The sociologist is bound to be uneasy about several features of Hirschman's argument, but perhaps he should also be uneasy about criticisms such as these; for the author has written previously on the economics of development and part of his argument is directed to the way that consumer dissatisfaction can be a driving force behind economic growth. *Shifting Involvements* can be read over and over again, with each reading disclosing new subtleties, so cunning is its construction and so original its standpoint. Professor Hirschman re-oriented our thoughts before, most notably with his *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*. Perhaps he had done it this time. Yet it seems more likely that this and his ideas will need to be elaborated and modified if they are to prove equally influential.

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By the right

Douglas Johnson

RENÉ RÉMOND

Les Droites en France
544pp. Paris: Aubier Montaigne.
118 fr.
2 7007 0260 3

René Rémond, of the Institut National de Sciences Politiques, has accomplished a remarkable feat of which he may well be proud. In 1954 he published *La Droite en France*, in which he presented the "right" in France in three categories, legitimist, monarchist and bonapartist. This tripartite division, which covered French history over the preceding century and a half, became rapidly established as a classic analysis, but its author might well have wondered how the years would modify the usefulness and the relevance of his schema. In 1954 Gaullism was in retirement at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, the adjective *pompidolien* and *giscardien* were as yet unknown, Jacques Chirac had not yet set foot in the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, while the sociological requirements of "la nouvelle droite" could hardly be predicted. Yet, in what is theoretically the fourth edition of his work but in reality a new and revised presentation of the whole subject, Professor Rémond finds that his divisions remain appropriate. As if to emphasize his confidence in his model, he has now entitled his work *Les Droites en France* rather than "la Droite".

Although he accepts that there is evidence to suggest that President Pompidou had his differences with de